

**CHILDREN'S GOSPEL
STORY-SERMONS**

WORKS BY

HUGH T. KERR, D.D.

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Children's Gospel Story-Sermons

By

HUGH T. KERR, D.D.

*Author of "Children's Missionary Story-Sermons,"
"Children's Story-Sermons," etc.*



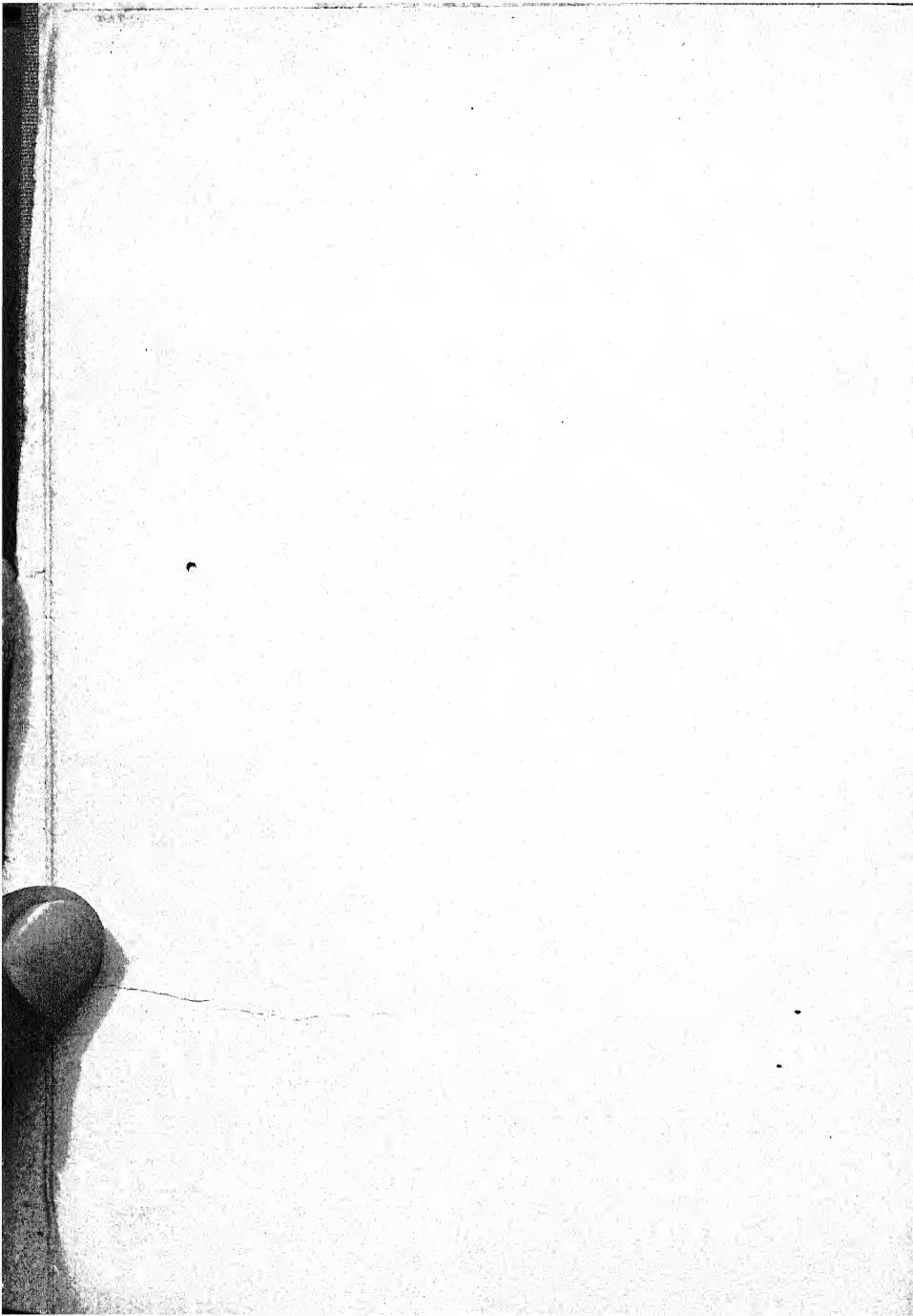
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DEDICATED TO
WILSON A. SHAW
A FRIEND
OF ALL THE CHILDREN.



FOREWORD

THE kindly reception given to the two preceding volumes, "Children's Story Sermons" and "Children's Missionary Story Sermons," together with the persuasive insistence of the children and their friends, have led to the publication of this volume of "Children's Gospel Story Sermons."

During the past few years there has been an encouraging increase in the publication of religious literature for children. It is impossible to exaggerate the value and importance of meeting a need that is obvious to all who think. The danger is that those who attempt to meet the need may miss the mark.

These are Story Sermons. They are not stories and must not be so judged. Sometimes they "tag a moral to a tale." They are not sermons and must not be tested by the one, two, three method of the classroom or the pulpit. Simplicity has been aimed at but the great central doctrines of the Christian faith have not been neglected.

Sir James Barrie in "The Little Minister" says that the first question always asked

of the child in his day was not, "What is your name?" but "What are you going to be?" and that one child in every family replied, "A minister." If this volume succeeds in interesting one outstanding boy to become a minister who will preach better Story Sermons than these, the purpose of this book will have been secured.

H. T. K.

PITTSBURGH, PA.

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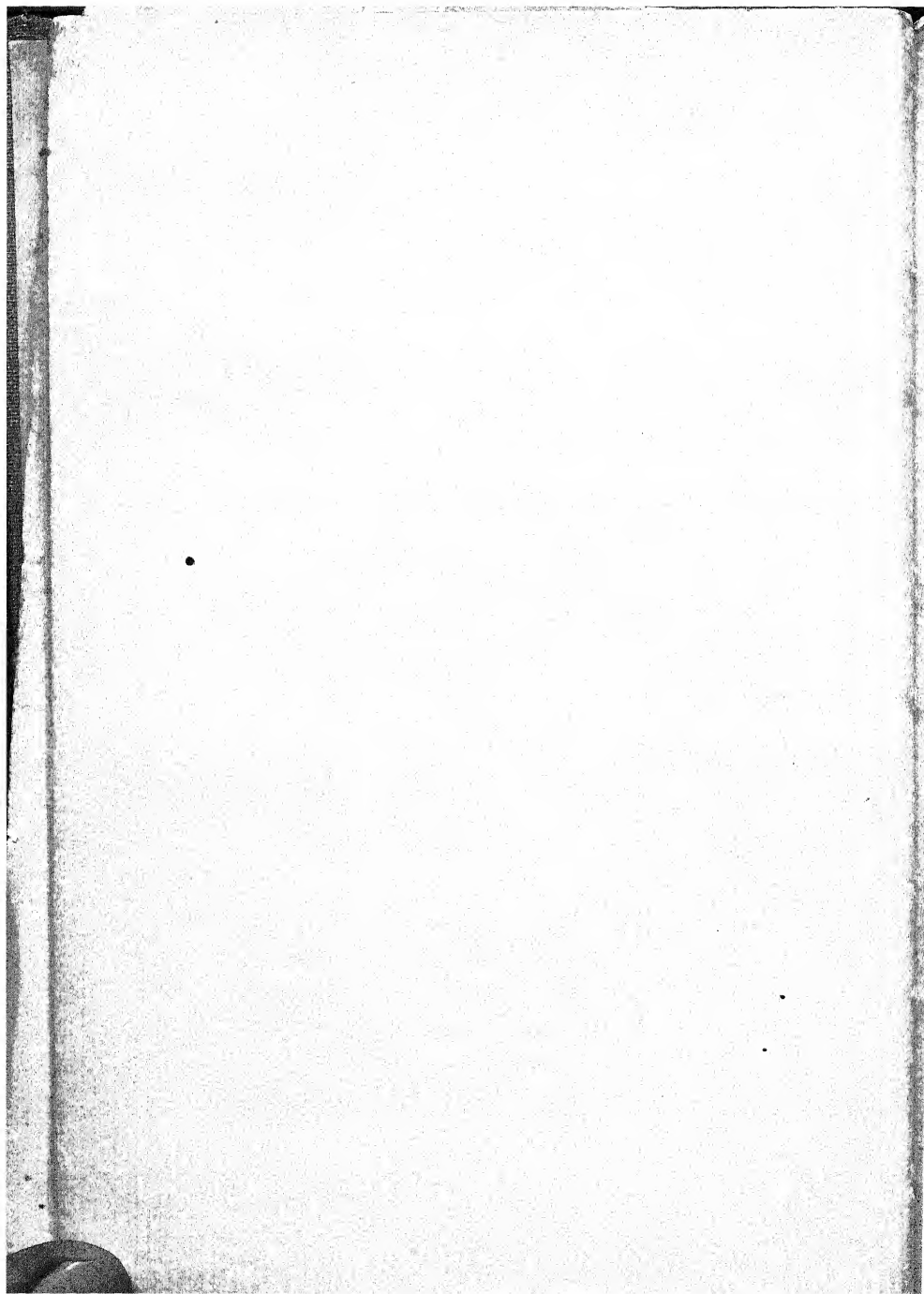
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I

THE FLOWER CLOCK

"I make all things new."—REV. 21:5.

THE other day, I heard about a new sort of clock. I had heard about grandfather clocks and banjo clocks and eight day clocks and electric and radium clocks and clocks that would not go. I had even heard of John B. Gough's clock. When it pointed to three o'clock, it struck six, and then he knew it was half-past nine. But I had never heard about a flower clock. That was a new sort of clock.

It was made by a great lover of flowers and shrubs and trees. His name was Linnæus and he lived in Sweden. His real name was Karl Von Linnè. When he was four years old he began to ask queer and interesting questions about plants and flowers and when he became an old man he was as reverent in a garden as he was in church. His motto in life was, "Live quietly. God is here."

His garden was full of rare and strange plants and it was in the garden that he kept

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his flower clock. The hours of the clock were marked by flowers that opened and closed at exactly the time of day where they appeared on the dial of the clock. The first flower to open was the goat's beard which marked the hour of three o'clock in the morning and from that hour on to midnight, every hour was marked by the opening of a new flower. At midnight the large flowering cactus closed its petals and then until three o'clock the great flower clock rested. What a strange clock it was and what a wise man he was who made it. He knew every flower and the hour when it opened and closed its petals. Each hour was thus marked by a beauty and fragrance of its own.

Every true life ought to be like a great flower clock. Every hour and every day and every year should be bright and beautiful. The Christian life is full of pleasant surprises and is like a continuous springtime. The hours are full of joy and beauty, and youth and old age have always their own delights. Did you ever notice how often in the Bible life is compared to flowers and plants and trees?

"As a flower of the field so he flourisheth."

"Consider the lilies of the field how they grow."

"He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."

If you will call to mind the words of the First Psalm which is one the Psalms boys and girls should know by heart, you will discover that it almost exactly describes a good life in terms of the flower clock:

"He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit
In his season;
His leaf also shall not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth
Shall prosper."

In the very last chapter of the Bible, we read of the tree of life which bears twelve manner of fruits and yields her fruit every month. The Christian life is like an unfading flower and like unfailing fruit.

II

THE HOLY ROAD

"The way of holiness."—ISA. 35:8.

THERE is a road in France that is called "The Holy Road." It is not a long road. It runs between the little city of Bar de Duc and the great fortress of Verdun. Our American soldiers called Bar le Duc "jelly town" because the finest jelly in the world is made there.

The road from Bar le Duc to Verdun runs among hills and beautiful valleys. I travelled up that road one day in a Ford truck and it reminded me of a name I once saw painted on an old overworked automobile, "Rolls Ruff."

The German Army decided to capture Verdun at any cost and the French determined to hold it at any cost. If you go there to-day you will see what a price was paid by both Germany and France, but France kept her pledge: "They shall not pass."

When the great battle began, the railroads running into Verdun were destroyed and the French Army had to be supplied by means of

trucks and the road from Bar le Duc was the only highway. So over this road thousands of army trucks travelled day and night. Every day for three long cruel months, 12,000 trucks went up to Verdun, loaded with soldiers and food and guns and ammunition and every day for three long cruel months 12,000 army trucks returned from Verdun loaded with wounded and wearied men. If anything went wrong with a truck it was cast aside and the great grey procession moved on. Over that highway more soldiers travelled never to return than over any other road in the world. That is why the French people call it "The Holy Road." It led over the road of sacrifice and service to the gates of death and victory.

I often think of that Holy Road and the graves I saw there and it has always seemed to me since that there are other Holy Roads that we can travel even in days of peace.

A good life is a Holy Road, and this was what the prophet meant when he spoke of the coming of Jesus who would build in the world "the way of holiness." Jesus shows us the true way to live. He leads us not in byways and in dangerous paths, but in ways of righteousness, in right ways, on the road of holiness.

A life of service is a Holy Road. This was

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the road the soldiers travelled. They went forward to serve their country. Every time we do something for others we travel over a Holy Road. The missionary travels a Holy Road to India or China or Africa. The teacher travels a Holy Road to school or church. The boy or girl who comes or goes cheerfully at the call of father or mother travels a Holy Road, but the holiest of all roads is the road Jesus travelled to Calvary, and we, too, may travel the Holy Road with him if we will rise up and follow him.

"In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian Sea.
The gracious calling of the Lord
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee."

III

THE BENGAL TIGER

"Free from sin."—ROM. 6:22.

THE other day I took five-year-old Donald to see the great tiger at the Zoo. It walked up to the bars from the back of the cage and Donald's face got white and then he ran away. I did not blame him. If there were no iron bars I would have run faster than he did.

But how would you like to be alone with a great Bengal tiger on a lonely hillside? I heard of a man who had that strange experience. He was a British officer in India. He had a little summer house on the top of a high hill which overlooked the jungle, but far enough removed from it to cause him no fear. And then he was an army officer and had rifles and pistols, so why should he be afraid?

One year in the time of the rainy season, a great flood covered the fields. There was water everywhere. The streams overflowed and the jungle became a great swamp, and the only dry place around was the hill where the

army officer lived. As the water rose higher and higher, the native people took refuge on the hill around his home, and out of the forest came the jungle animals. It was a strange group that found shelter on that Indian hillside. Suddenly fear fell upon the people, for as they looked out over the rising flood, they saw the head of a great wild Bengal tiger. It was swimming in the water and was coming directly to the hill where there was still dry ground. When it reached the land it shook off the water and lay down on the grass as quietly as a lamb.

It did not know what to do. It was afraid. Fear had taken away all its fierceness. It was more afraid than the people who had been terrorised by its coming. What could they do? Some pitied it. But the Indian officer knew better. He knew that soon the flood would disappear and that fear would pass away and the fierceness of the tiger would return, so he took his gun and walked up to the great beast which was lying so still and brought the gun close to its head and shot, and the great tiger rolled over dead.

Now what do you think? Do you think the officer did the right thing or was he cruel? I am sure he did the right thing, for had he waited, the great wild tiger would soon have

attacked the helpless women and children who had taken refuge on the hill. There was only one thing to do with that wild tiger, and that was to shoot it dead. A wild tiger is never safe. Better shoot it than have it destroy and kill. And there is only one thing to do with sin, which is just like a wild beast, and that is to kill it. Don't wait. Even if it seems harmless, kill it. If you leave a bad habit alone, sooner than we think it will master us and enslave and destroy us. There is just one right thing to do with temptation and sin and bad habits, and that is to kill them right now. Don't wait. Do with sin what the army officer did with the Bengal tiger—shoot it dead.

IV

THE BEST NOT GOOD ENOUGH

"Very Precious."—JOHN 12:3.

NEXT to his own home Jesus loved best the home at Bethany. Whenever he could get away from the busy city of Jerusalem he would disappear from the crowd and spend the night with Mary and Martha and Lazarus in their Bethany home. The story tells us that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus."

They were each so different, yet Jesus loved them all. Mary was patient and sweet, Martha was restless and always busy. Lazarus was sick and almost always silent, but Jesus loved each one. They seemed to understand him even better than his disciples.

Mary especially understood and knew when Jesus came to their home the Saturday before Good Friday that his enemies would soon betray him and put him to death. So one night Mary planned to show her love to Jesus before he should die. You know when people die we send flowers to the home, but Mary knew a

better way. She would give the flowers to Jesus while he was still with her. That is much the better way. Only instead of giving him flowers she poured at his feet rich and fragrant perfume, for in those days people did not give flowers as we do. The perfume which Mary poured out was so rare and costly that everybody wondered and Judas called it "waste," but Jesus understood and his heart was made glad.

I have often wondered where Mary got such rich and rare perfume, and I remember an old, old story about her. It is said that the morning after the thought came into her heart she went to the shop in the city where perfumes were kept and told the owner what she wanted. He showed her one box and when he told her the price she asked to see something else. He showed her another and another, but she was not satisfied. The shopman was puzzled, but Mary was so much in earnest that he continued to show all his goods. She would test the perfume, ask the price and then inquire if there was not something still better. At last she had tested all that was in the shop and was still dissatisfied when the owner said that he had one box of precious perfume, but it was so rich and so rare and so costly that he felt she would not wish to buy it.

Mary was not a wealthy woman and the precious box would cost in our money about fifty dollars. Mary's eyes showed in a moment that she was interested and so the man brought from a little closed cupboard the precious box. When Mary saw it and smelled the sweet and delicate fragrance she said, "This is what I want. Nothing is too good for my Lord." So she paid the price and that night at the supper table when her friends were with her she took the precious perfume and "anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Judas was angry at what he called Mary's wasteful extravagance, but Jesus knew she had done it because of her love for him and he said: "She hath done what she could; she hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying. And verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

That is a beautiful old story and it has two sermons wrapped up in it. The first is that Mary did not wait till Jesus died before she showed her love. She brought her perfume to Jesus while he was still with her. Let us bestow our gifts and our flowers now and not

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wait till it is too late. The second sermon is that nothing is too good for Jesus. Mary was not satisfied with anything, not even with a second best. She gave Jesus the very best she could find and the most costly gift she could purchase. Let us give Jesus our best years, our best thoughts, our best love. Nothing is too good for him.

Let this be our prayer:

Dear Lord, the best was not too good for Thee to give us.

Thou didst give us the greatest gift—Thyself.

Thou didst love us and give Thyself for us. With Thyself Thou hast given light to guide us, love to satisfy us, life to make us strong.

Dear Lord, we would give Thee our best. We would give Thee our best thoughts, our best love, our best days.

V

A WORD THAT WAS A LAMP

"Thy word is a lamp."—PSALM 119: 105.

IF you listen I will tell you how a word can be a lamp. Many, many years ago, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven hundred years ago a man whose name was Gilbert à Becket lived in London, England. He was young and brave and good. He was a merchant but he left home and went to the Holy Land to fight to win back Jerusalem from the heathen people who had held it for years. He was a Crusader. Perhaps you know what that means.

Well, Gilbert à Becket went to the war and he was taken prisoner and sold as a slave to a Saracen Prince who was very cruel and very rich. The prince put him to work in his garden, a beautiful garden, and at night shut him up in a prison so he could not escape. One day when he was hard at work, the daughter of the prince came into the garden and saw this young man with the beautiful white face and became much interested in him.

After awhile when no one was looking she spoke to him and told him that she was very sorry for him.

That was not all. That is never all when a beautiful young woman meets a handsome young man. She learned to love him and after awhile they knew that they loved each other. One night she gave him money and opened the door of his prison and let him go free. She told him to fly to England and she would follow him some day. So they kissed each other good-bye, and that was the end of his garden-
ing.

But what has that to do with a word being a lamp? Listen.

Weeks and months passed, and one day the princess could wait no longer. She too would be a Christian and fly to England and meet her lover. But those were hard cruel days and the way was not easy. She did not know the language of the country where her lover had gone. Before he left he had taught her this word—"London" and she knew his name, "*à Becket*." That was all she knew,—"*London à Becket*."

She found an English ship and when she was asked where she wished to go said "*London à Becket*." That was all. The sailors did not understand everything, but they under-

stood enough. That word became a lamp to her feet and a light to her path. It lighted her over the deep dark dangerous sea and she came at last to the English shore. London was far from the shore and there were then no fine roads and no fast railroads. The road was rough and full of robbers and bad men. "London à Becket" was all she could say, but that word pointed out the way for her and led her on. She felt strange and lonely when she came to the great city and men and women and little children looked wonderingly at her, but all she could say was "London à Becket."

That word led her on from street to street and from door to door. At last the people began to understand and they too began to speak the word, and they carried it from house to house until they found the home of Gilbert à Becket. You see now how a word became a lamp. When he saw her and heard her voice, he ran and caught her in his strong arms and brought her into his home and they were happily married. That word had lighted her path and brought her to the very door of her lover and into his arms. They were very happy and like all true stories, they lived together and loved each other for many years. She was the mother of one of the world's great men—Thomas à Becket, who became Archbishop of

Canterbury, about whom you have read and heard.

So you see a word can be a light and a lamp. There are hundreds and thousands of words in the Bible which have guided men and women over hard and dangerous roads, through dark nights, and brought them to happiness and peace. Let me give you two or three of these guiding words.

"Come unto me."

"Trust in the Lord."

"Fear not. I am with thee."

"God is love."

"The Lord is my Shepherd."

Boys and girls should hide away God's words in their hearts. Those who walk in the light of Bible truth will never wander.

"Thy Word is like a starry host;
A thousand rays of light
Are seen to guide the traveller
And make his pathway bright."

There is one word which has lighted millions on their way. Little children and old men have followed its leading, and its light never burns dim and never goes out. It is the word "Jesus." When we speak his name he comes. He is the Light of the World and He is our Guide.

VI

BELLS OF GOLD

"Bells of Gold."—Ex. 28: 33.

THE Bible does not say much about bells. The people of the Bible did not use bells as we do. Those little bells of gold in the text were little tinkling ornaments on the fringe of the garment of the high priest. The people of olden times did not have beautiful bells and chimes such as we have. We use bells to tell the time, to give alarm, to herald a celebration, to call to church. The Jews did not ring bells to call to worship, they sounded a silver trumpet. But a bell can be heard much farther than a trumpet and for centuries church bells in all countries have been calling people to prayer. We wonder how people got along without bells and chimes, calling them to worship and telling them that the Sabbath had come and the doors of the temple had been flung wide open.

Over in England, near a pretty little country village called Warmsworth, there is a little old church that has no steeple and no bell. It

is located nearly a mile from the village and when you look carefully at the church you feel that once upon a time it must have had a bell and a steeple. Well, it had and this is the story.

The church was so far from the village that the people rarely heard the church bell ring. If the wind was high or the day stormy or the people busy, the bell would ring and no one would hear and so Sunday was forgotten and the church neglected, for the people in the olden times did not keep track of the days and the hours as we do. They did not have watches and clocks and calendars and some times they lost count of the days of the week. The old minister was worried and at last he said, "This is what I'll do. If the people cannot hear the bell, then I'll make them hear it. I'll take the bell into the village." And he did. He had the steeple removed from the church and put up in the town and whenever services were held in the church, the bell would ring right in the midst of the people. There, to-day, among the houses you can see the ivy covered steeple with the belfry and people cannot forget the hour of service. Don't you think he was a very wise and wonderful old minister!

And lest we forget, God has put a little bell not in our village but in our hearts. There

it rings and we cannot help hearing it. It rings in among our thoughts and feelings and actions. Sometimes it rings an alarm as if it were an iron bell and we say:

"Hear the tolling of the bells,
Iron bells."

Sometimes it rings for joy and we listen as if to golden bells. Sometimes it warns and startles us and then again it rings like chimes in among happy music. What do we call that little bell? Yes! It is conscience. We speak of it as a voice—the voice of conscience, and we call it the voice of God in our souls, but I like to think of it as a bell, that calls us to prayer, to worship, to God.

"Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea;
And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee."

VII

THE NAME IN THE GARDEN

"In the beginning God."—GEN. I: I.

I WONDER how many know the very first verse in the Bible. Of course everybody knows what it is. It begins, "In the beginning God." I think that is a wonderful way for the Bible to start. It puts God first. It puts God in the very first verse of the first chapter of the first book in the Bible and that is the way every boy and girl should begin life. They should put God first.

Away over in a city called Aberdeen, nearly three hundred years ago, there lived a great wise man who was a poet, that is, he wrote verses, and he was also a philosopher, that is, he said and wrote many wise things. So wise was he that the King of England sent for him and gave him a pension of a thousand dollars a year for the wonderful wise way he had of telling plain people and little children about the things of God.

I am going to tell you how wise he was. His name was Dr. James Beattie, and he had a

little boy in his home who was just five years old, and he had learned to spell out his own name. You know that is the first word a little child learns. To spell his own name is the most important thing in the world to him. This wise father was anxious to have his little boy learn something else than letters and words. He wanted him to learn about God, and he wondered and wondered how he could teach his little boy that everything in the world belonged to God.

One day he went out into the garden and wrote his little son's name in the ground with his finger and then sowed some mustard seed in the place where he had written the letters of the little lad's name. He said nothing about what he had done. After ten days or so, the little boy came running into his father's study saying, "Father, father, my name is coming up in the garden." He could read it and it was as wonderful as a miracle to him. His father tried not to show any surprise and told his son that it must be a mistake, that it could not be that his name was growing up in the garden, and that he should not talk like that. But the little boy would not be still, and taking him by the hand said, "Come, father, come, and see for yourself if my name is not coming up in the ground." Sure enough there it was in

beautiful green letters, and the little boy could spell out his own name,—J-A-M-E-S B-E-A-T-T-I-E.

But still the father seemed not to be surprised and said, "There is nothing strange about it. It just came there I suppose." The boy was not satisfied and taking his father by the hand, he led him into the house and said, "I don't think it came by chance, father, it could not come by chance." "Do you think somebody put it there?" asked his father. "Yes, father, I do. I think somebody put it there." Then the great man took the little boy on his knee and told him that somebody had put it there, that he had put it there himself.

He then told him about the great world, and that Somebody must have made the great beautiful world with its flowers and trees and birds, and that Somebody had made him and put him into the garden of life, and that that Somebody was God, and that he was God's little boy and was more wonderful than all the mustard seed and all the gardens, for God had put him into this life for some great purpose.

God cares more for little children than for flowers and trees and mountains and starry nights, and just as God cares for the grass of the field, so He cares for His own dear chil-

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dren. God is the great Gardener, and it is He
who makes beauty in a leaf and in a life.

"He leant, at sunset, on his spade.
(Oh, but the child was sweet to see,
The one who in the orchard played!)
He called, 'I've planted you a tree!'

"The boy looked at it for a while,
Then at the radiant woods below;
And said, with wonder in his smile—
'Why don't you put the leaves on though?'

"The gardener, with a reverent air,
Lifted his eyes, took off his hat—
'The Other Man, the One up there,'
He answered, 'He must see to that.'"

VIII

THE PENNY AND THE DOLLAR

"Faithful in that which is least."—LUKE 16:10.

JESUS had faith in little things. He loved little children. He called his disciples his "little flock." He tested success according to faithfulness in little things.

The other day I heard about a quarrel between something that was very little and something that was big. No! It was not between a little dog and a big dog. It was a quarrel between a penny and a dollar, and this is how it began and this is how it ended. The dollar said to the penny something like this,—
"Little penny, you're just no good. You can't buy anything any more and you're not worth carrying around. It takes a hundred of you to make one of me and even I can't buy much, but you're just no good. You might just as well go out of business." When it heard that the little penny turned over twice and looking straight into the face of the big dollar, said,
"Mr. Dollar, most of what you say is true. Every one knows it's true. But when you say

that you are better than I am, that is not true. I am better than you. Indeed, I am much better, for I go to church every Sunday and you go only once in awhile."

And that is how the quarrel ended, for out of the pennies and the nickels and the dimes, missionary schools and colleges have been built. Big things are always quarrelling with little things and all the time the little things go on with their work.

I have heard too of another quarrel between something that was very little and something that was very big. It was between a little living thing and a great big thing, as big as a mountain. Indeed, it was between a great big mountain and—what do you think? The story is told in verse and this is the story:—

"The mountain and the squirrel
Had a quarrel
And the former called the latter 'Little Prig.'"

Now that was not nice. It is never nice to call people names, and the mountain was big and strong and the squirrel was little and timid. But the squirrel turned up his bushy tail and shook it at the mountain and said, "Oh!"

"You are doubtless very big!
But all sorts of things and weather
Must be taken in together
To make up a year
And a sphere

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And I think it no disgrace
To occupy my place
If I'm not so large as you
You are not so small as I
And not half so spry."

I am sure you feel that was a very good reply.
But the squirrel was not through. He was
bound to have the last word so he said to the
mountain:

"I'll not deny you make
A very pretty squirrel track;
Talents differ; all is well and wisely put
If I cannot carry forests on my back
Neither can you crack a nut."

Now that was the end of the quarrel for there
was nothing left for the mountain to say, and
Emerson who wrote those pretty lines meant
us to see that each was best in its own place.
And yet we like to remember that Jesus loved
little things best of all, for once when the
disciples were quarrelling about who was the
greatest, Jesus took a little child—perhaps a
little blue eyed boy with curly hair, and taking
him on his knee he told them that a little child
has first place in the Kingdom of God.

IX

THINGS MONEY CANNOT BUY

"Silver and gold have I none."—ACTS 3:6.

WHEN Christmas comes, we like to buy presents for our friends and before we know it, our money is all gone. Somehow we get to think that if we have no money we can give nothing and do nothing and we forget that the very best things in the world cannot be bought with money. We cannot buy love or laughter or friendship or the stars or the sky or the birds or the great wide sea with money.

When Peter and John met the beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, he asked them for money. Peter and John had no money. They were poor men. They were almost as poor as the beggar himself. But they did not pass him by. They did not say "no" to him. They looked at him and Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." The beggar obtained that day the greatest gift he ever re-

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ceived and it was a gift that had nothing to do with money or silver or gold. If we could only remember that the best gifts have nothing to do with money, much happiness would be added to life.

I was reading not long ago about a poor man who had lost his memory. For years he was cared for like a little child. He had been a rich man and had had a college education, but everything that he once had, meant nothing to him and when he died he left a "will" behind. It was a strange but beautiful will and it read as follows:—

"I leave the children for the term of their childhood the flowers, fields, blossoms and woods, with the right to play among them freely, warning them at the same time against thistles and thorns.

"I devise to them the banks, the brooks and the golden sands beneath the waters thereof and the white clouds that float over the giant trees and long, long days to be merry in and the night and the moon and the train of the milky way to wonder at.

"To the boys I devise the meadows with the clover blossoms, butterflies thereof, the woods with their beauty, squirrels, birds, echoes and strange noises, all the distant places that may be visited together with the adventures there found.

"And to those who are no longer children or youths or lovers, I leave memory and bequeath them the volumes of Burns, Shakespeare and other poets, if there be others, to live over their old days again without tithe. To the loved ones with snowy crowns, I bequeath happiness, old age, the love and gratitude of little children, until they fall asleep."

What gifts the dear old man left in his will!
He gave no money, no stocks, no bonds, no

gold. But he gave love and sunshine and song and happiness and we are all his heirs.

The greatest givers have had no money to give away. Socrates and Lincoln, Shakespeare and Florence Nightingale left no wealth behind them. We remember too that Jesus had no money and yet he was the world's greatest giver of good gifts. He was homeless. Once he said:

"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." He was homeless and yet what priceless gifts he gave the world! It was he who said:

"I came
That they may have life,
And may have it
Abundantly."

Yes! It must be true. The best things cannot be bought with money.

X

THE BOY WHO BECAME A DEACON

"Come and he cometh."—MATT. 8:9.

HIS name was Tony. He was a boy without a country. His father and mother came from Italy, but Tony was born on a French ship, out on the great Atlantic. He had played as a boy under the blue Italian sky and among the bright Italian flowers, but like thousands of other little Italian boys had come to America to win fortune and perhaps fame. Tony and his father and mother settled down in the East side of New York. At first the great city, with its noise and hurry made him afraid, but after awhile he became familiar with the streets and he felt as much at home as if he were in sunny Italy.

His father and mother were loyal Roman Catholics and Tony went every now and then with them to the great cathedral on Fifth Avenue. One day when he was five years old, one of his playmates said to him, "Tony, come with me," and Tony went, not knowing where

he was going. It was Sunday and when he reached the place, where do you think he was? Well, he was at a Presbyterian Sunday School. That was a strange place for a little Roman Catholic boy, and Tony felt very, very strange. He is not quite sure but he thinks it was the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church Sunday School, for this is a true story and Tony is now a man, and if you ask me about him, I will tell you his name and where you can find him.

After awhile Tony liked the place. The music interested him and the sweet face of the woman who taught the class pleased him, and so he went back again next Sunday and continued to go back every Sunday until he was twelve years old. During those seven years he learned a great deal about God and the Bible, and he was thinking. He was thinking hard.

One Sunday night he slipped away from home. It was summer and the doors of the church were open and Tony went in and sat in the back seat and listened. Just before the sermon started, some one sat down beside him and when he looked, it was his mother. She had missed him and knowing how fond he was of the church, she had gone out to find him and had found him in the church. They sat quietly through the service for they both

liked it and they went again. They kept on going until the minister knew them, and one evening he called at their humble little home and talked to the mother and Tony about God and his great love for them.

This is the way Tony became interested in church and one Sunday morning his mother and he stood up before the great congregation and confessed their faith in Jesus as their Saviour. From that day to this, Tony has never missed church. When he grew up he moved away from New York, but in his new home up in New York State, in a beautiful city, he found another church and he is a Deacon in that church, and a useful, helpful, earnest Christian whom every one loves and trusts.

You can never tell what will happen when a boy starts to go to Sunday School, and perhaps the very best thing you can do is to say to some playmate or friend, "Come with me." Nobody knows the name of the little Italian boy who one Sunday morning said to Tony, "Come with me," but because he was interested enough to say it, there is now in one of our churches a helpful, happy man whose life was made useful and happy by the quiet invitation of a playmate.

How glad we should be that we have Sunday Schools where thousands and millions of

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boys all over our land and other lands, can learn about God's great love for all little children!

How do you show your loyalty to your church and Sunday School? Suppose in your school there are five hundred scholars and suppose every scholar did what was done by Tony's friend. What would be the result? How many scholars would your school have? Instead of having five hundred you would have a thousand. And suppose every one of the thirty-five million or more Sunday School scholars of the world were to do the same thing how many Sunday School scholars would there be in the world? Can you answer that? If you cannot perhaps you can try to answer this more simple question:

"What sort of school
Would our school be,
If all the members
Were just like me?"

XI

PLAYING CHURCH

"A little child shall lead them."—ISA. 11:6.

CHILDREN like to play church. They like to sing and they like to preach.

Some of the world's great preachers have played at church when they were very young. Charles Kingsley preached his first sermon when he was four years old. There seems to be a sort of instinct in children for preaching, and I wonder why more of them do not keep on and become real preachers?

Did you ever hear of a preacher called Gipsy Smith? Gipsy is not his real name, but he was born in a Gipsy camp and every one calls him Gipsy Smith. He is a great preacher, a great singer, and he tells us how his children used to play church and to imitate him.

One night after he had come home from a meeting very tired and it was time for the children to be in bed, his two boys, Albany and Hanley, came to their father's room to say good-night. They did not want to say good-night for they wished to visit for awhile

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with their father, and so they agreed that they would have a "meeting" in their father's room.

When they had kissed him good-night, Albany said to his brother, "Hanley, let's have a meeting, let's sing 'Jesus Loves Me This I Know,' and Brother Gipsy Smith will play the accompaniment." So they all sang. Then the little lad said, "Brother Gipsy Smith will pray." You see, they were making good use of their father. Gipsy Smith kneeled down and prayed very simply that God would bless his two boys and would make them good men. When the prayer was over Albany said, "We will now have Hanley Smith's experience." So little Hanley rose and said:

"I am only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
My life's of little value,
But there's One who cares for me."

When he sat down, Albany said, "We will now have Brother Gipsy Smith's experience," and so the great preacher told how God took him from a gipsy tent and made him a preacher of the blessed gospel and urged his boys to live and speak for God always.

Albany had conducted the service very well and it was now his turn to speak, but with a merry twinkle in his eye, he said, "Friends, the meeting is over," and kissing their father

once more good-night, they tumbled off to bed.
Boys always tumble off to bed.

There are two things to remember in this story sermon. First,—the little boys' religion. It was real and it was simple. Do you know the words of the hymn from which Hanley Smith quoted?

"I am only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
My life is of little value,
But the Lord doth care for me.

"I have no barn or storehouse,
I neither sow nor reap;
God gives me a sparrow's portion,
But never a seed to keep.

"I know there are many sparrows
All over the world we're found:
But our Heavenly Father knoweth
When one of us falls to the ground.

"Though small, we are never forgotten;
Though weak, we are never afraid;
For we know that the dear Lord keepeth
The life of the creatures He made."

Second,—the father's beautiful loyalty. Next time you play church, be sure your father plays with you and be careful to give him the biggest part of the meeting. Playing church is not very interesting unless you have father's help.

XII

A CHRISTMAS STORY-SERMON

"God with us."—MATT. I: 23.

TWO American girls were spending the winter in the city of Rome. Their parents were there on business and during the winter months Jean and Sarah attended the girls' school and became very much interested in art.

Every Saturday morning they would visit the galleries and cathedrals where the old masterpieces could be seen, and on the following Monday reported to their teacher what they had found and why they were especially interested in such and such pictures. They spent day after day in the Vatican museum where they saw Raphael's painting of the Transfiguration which is so familiar to us and many other wonderful and priceless treasures.

One Saturday they set out to see a painting of which they had often heard. It is called the Aurora and represents the chariot of the sun coming up through the clouds and driv-

ing away the dark. It was painted by an Italian named Guido Reni. He painted many religious pictures but this painting of the Aurora is one that is most familiar. It is a picture of horses and clouds, youths and maidens, darkness and light.

He painted it in such a strange place. He did not paint it on a canvas, nor on a wall, but on the ceiling of a wonderful palace.

When Jean and Sarah reached the Palazzo Rospigliosi, for that is the name of the palace, they were eager to see the wonderful painting of which they had heard so much and seen so many copies. They were not disappointed. Far up in the ceiling they saw for the first time the horses and the clouds and the attendants upon the chariot of the sun. "Aurora" you know means the dawn and the painter was trying to show in art how the morning dawn came out of the night. The painting was far more wonderful than they had dreamed, for now they saw it with all its beautiful colors and its great and golden background.

Did you ever try to look at something high up above your head? Perhaps you have tried to look at a balloon, or an aeroplane, or a kite, or the great stars far up above. You know how hard it is. Your back gets tired, your eyes grow weary and hazy, and after awhile

you can look no longer and turn away to rest your eyes upon the ground.

This is just what these American girls did, but they were very much surprised when they turned their eyes to see before them the very same painting in all its colored beauty. How could that be? I will tell you. When they turned away to rest their eyes, they saw before them what they had missed by their eagerness. They saw a large table, and the table top was one large and splendid mirror which exactly reflected the painting on the ceiling. So instead of looking up they could stand beside the table, or sit comfortably, and look into the mirror, and see all the beautiful painting perfectly imaged forth.

What they had tried to see up in the ceiling they now saw plainly before their eyes.

Christmas is just a mirror. In it we see the glory of God. For centuries the world had been looking up to see God and had grown weary looking and then God came down to earth and was born in Bethlehem as a little child, and in Jesus we look into the very face of God. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

They called his name Emmanuel which means, "God with us." In Jesus' face we be-

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hold the glory of God. This is what Christmas means. This is why we sing:

"O come
Let us adore Him
Christ
The Lord."

XIII

THREE PICTURES OF A BOY

"There is a lad here."—JOHN 6:9.

THE hero of this story is nameless. Jesus took the five rolls and the two little fish of this little nameless lad, and fed the great multitude of 5,000 men, beside women and children. I have always wished that this boy's name had been told us. Perhaps it was Stephen, or James, or Thomas. We do not know. We do not know where he lived and we do not know what became of him. We only know that he followed the crowd around the lake so as to meet Jesus when he landed from the boat on the other side.

His mother, knowing how hungry boys get, had prepared for him a little lunch but he had been so interested in all that was happening that he had forgotten it until he gave it to Jesus. You remember the story. The people were so occupied by what Jesus had been saying and doing, that before they knew it was late, the evening had come on and there

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was nothing for them to eat. The disciples had neither food nor money and they were about to dismiss the multitude when Andrew came with the news that he had found a little lad with five small rolls and two fish. That was all he had found. But Jesus was immediately interested and the boy was brought to him.

What do you think Jesus did? He took the little lad's food and blessed it and gave it to his disciples and they in turn gave it to the people. How proud and happy the little boy was when he saw what had happened! He had not only been fed himself, but all in the great crowd had all they could eat. What a fine story he would tell his mother when he returned and ever after he would be pointed out as the boy who had given his lunch to Jesus. He had not much to give but he had given all that he had and Jesus had used his gift to feed a great multitude. Jesus needed just what that nameless little boy had to give.

Somewhere I have seen an old picture of three boys. The picture is in three parts. The one to the left shows us a boy with a book in his hand and he is reading and thinking, and the motto at the bottom of the picture is "I Learn." The one to the right is of a boy with a sword in his hand and it has for a motto,

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"I Fight." That is a good motto. I once heard of a boy whose motto was, "I ain't afraid to fight and I ain't afraid to pray." The picture in the centre is of a boy who holds in his hand a spade and his motto is, "I Work." Those mottoes are good mottoes for boys. "I Learn," "I Fight," "I Work." I would like to paint a fourth picture of the little lad who followed Jesus. He did not have in his hand a book, or a sword, or a spade. He had only a little lunch, and his motto was, "I Give."

When we think of it, that too was the motto of Jesus. He said, "I came not to be served but to serve and to *give* my life a ransom for many." This little nameless lad had learned in the presence of Jesus the true meaning of life. We are here not to get, but to give. We are to serve others rather than to be served by others. And this is the beautiful thing about such a life, that Jesus takes the little we give and multiplies it by a thousand, or perhaps a million.

XIV

THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE

"He was lame."—2 SAM. 9: 13.

THE story of the friendship of David and Jonathan is familiar to all of us. Every boy and girl knows how David, the shepherd boy, was loved by Jonathan, the Prince. The story tells us that the soul of Jonathan "was knit" to the soul of David. Just as you knit silk to silk and wool to wool and steel to steel, so the true, strong soul of Jonathan, the Prince, was knit to the true, strong soul of David, the shepherd lad.

It happened that Jonathan's father, Saul, hated David and tried to kill him, but Jonathan warned David and pledged him his love. He went out into the woods and put his own princely garments upon David and told him that he would be king over Israel. Jonathan was so much in love with David that he was willing to give him his own right to the throne. The story is very beautiful and very sad for in time both Saul the King and Jonathan the Prince were lost in battle and David

mourned for Jonathan as he would have mourned for his own brother.

The years passed and David was made king and the family of Saul suffered from the hands of David's friends. Now Jonathan had a son. He had a long, long name. I will spell it,—M-E-P-H-I-I-B-O-S-H-E-T-H—Mephibosheth. When Jonathan, his father was killed, Mephibosheth was just five years old. When the news came to the palace that both King Saul and Prince Jonathan were killed, the royal nurse picked up the little Mephibosheth and hurried off with him to a safe hiding place. But in her hurry, she fell and the little lad was hurt. He became that day a cripple for life and ever after was lame on both feet.

Some years after David had been king, he was told about Mephibosheth and sent for the little lame prince. When he saw the boy, he loved him and adopted him as his own son and Mephibosheth ever after lived in the palace and ate at the king's table. I suppose people envied him as they saw him sitting at the window or riding in the royal chariot, but if they had known everything, they would have felt sorry for the little lad who could not run and jump and play like other boys.

We like to think of David's kindness to the little lame prince and that the lad was com-

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forted by the friendship of the king. He was not to be envied because of his lameness, but he might be envied on account of the king's friendship.

As I was thinking about Mephibosheth, I came upon these verses and if they are not part of the story, they are surely part of the sermon.

"Most every day a little boy comes driving past our
house
With the nicest little pony—just the colour of a mouse—
And a groom rides close behind him, so he won't get
hurt, you see
And I used to wish the pony and the cart belonged
to me.

"I used to watch him from our porch and wish that I
could own
His pony and his little cart, and drive out all alone,
And once when I knelt down at night I prayed the
Lord that he
Would fix it so the pony and the cart belonged to me.

"But yesterday I saw him where he lives, and now I
know
Why he never goes out walkin'—'cause his legs are
withered so!—
And last night when I was kneelin' with my head on
mother's knee,
I was glad he had the pony and the cart instead of me."

A great man has said that if we knew all that was in the heart of every man, we would envy no one. There is a beautiful verse in the New Testament which says, "Love envieth not." Can you find where it is? Will you try to find what it means?

XV

THE HOUSE BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

"Come into my house."—Acts 16: 15.

WERE you ever a stranger in a strange city? You meet hundreds and thousands of people but you know no one, and not one knows you. It is a very lonely feeling.

It was the way Paul felt when he went to Philippi, the great city which Alexander the Great and Philip his father had made famous. One day he wandered out of the big Roman city down by the river side and there he found a group of people. He had to introduce himself and then he told them about Jesus and after that he had many friends. One of his friends was Lydia, a rich woman of Philippi, who opened her house to Paul and his companions, and from that home Paul carried on his great and wonderful work.

Her home was like the house about which Sam Walter Foss wrote. You know what he

said about "The House by the Side of the Road." Let me tell you how he came to write those beautiful verses. He was taking a long tramp through England. He loved to walk in the country among the fields and through the little country villages. One day he came to a long hard hill and near the top there was a little unpainted house that at first looked as if it were built right on the road. When he came up to the house, he saw a queer little finger-post pointing in toward the yard and underneath was a still more queerly painted sign with the words, "Come in and have a drink." He was hot and tired and the little garden looked inviting, so in he went and soon found a spring of ice cold water beside which was an old-fashioned dipper made out of a gourd. Do you know what a gourd is? It is like a squash. But that was not all he found. On a rough bench beside the spring was a basket of ripe red apples with another sign—"Help yourself." He did help himself and sat down to enjoy both the spring water and the fragrant apples.

By and by an old man came out of the house and seated himself beside the visitor and the old man told how he and his wife lived together all alone in the little house. They were too poor to give money and too old to help in

the good work of the world, so they took this way to help make other people happy.

I think it was a very nice way and so did Mr. Foss, for he began to think about it and then he wrote the verses which have been read all round the world.

"Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by,—
The men that are good, the men that are bad,
As good and as bad as I.
Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban?
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man."

I think the dear old man and his dear wife in their dear little home were doing just what God would like them to do. They gave no money but they gave rest and joy and happiness to those who passed their house. It would be a more friendly world if all of us tried to follow their example.

XVI

A FIRE IN A COLD ROOM

"They kindled a fire."—ACTS 28:2.

ONE of England's greatest men is Earl Grey. He is a great Statesman and he loves to fish and roam in the fields and listen to the birds. When Theodore Roosevelt went to Europe, Earl Grey took him out into the woods and told him the names of all the birds that were singing in the trees.

His father was once the Governor General of Canada and he was a great and good man. One day Earl Grey was talking about his father and telling some of his friends what sort of man he was and this is what he said. He said that his father "lighted so many fires in cold rooms." I wonder if you know what he meant.

You know how cold a cold room is and how nice and cosy it feels after a bright warm fire has been lighted in it. When Paul was shipwrecked upon the island after the awful storm that destroyed the ship, the first thing the people of the island did was to light a fire. Paul

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and all his shipwrecked friends were cold and wet and the fire was like the gift of God to them.

Well, there are other kinds of fires besides those that are made with coal and wood and oil and gas, and there are other kinds of cold than frost and snow and chilly wintry winds.

There is such a thing as a cold church. People come and go and are not interested in one another and everything seems cold and dead. Then perhaps some good man or good woman comes into the church, or a new preacher, or God himself comes by his Holy Spirit, and there is a "fire" lighted in that cold church, and everybody begins to feel differently and to act differently and pray differently.

There is such a thing as a cold person. We talk sometimes of receiving a chilly reception. We know some boys who seem to throw cold water on every plan, and we know some boys who like Earl Grey's father light fires in cold rooms. Whenever and wherever they come, people feel happier and more friendly. It was said of Whittier the poet that "he never darkened a day or shadowed a life." He was one of the people who lighted fires in cold rooms. Would you not like it to be said of you that you too lighted fires in cold rooms?

There is such a thing as a cold heart. The

Bible speaks of a "stony heart" and the Hymnal asks God to:

"Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours."

Only God can kindle a fire in a cold heart.
He can set our hearts on fire with love to him
so that more than anything else in the world,
we will want to do his will and live for him.
This is what God meant when he said,—

"I will give them
One heart
And I will put a new spirit
Within you.
And I will take away
The cold heart
And give them a warm heart"

XVII

THE CLOSED DOORWAY

"Knock, and it shall be opened."—MATT. 7:7.

WHERE is the greatest church in the world? It is in the city of Rome in Italy. What is it called? It is called The Church of St. Peter. How big is it? I am afraid I cannot tell you. You must see it to know how big it is. A simple carved leaf on one of the pillars is five feet long. That will give you an idea of how big everything is. The great church is crowded with altars and tombs and shrines and fonts and chapels and you could drive a team of horses on the path that leads around the great dome. I remember climbing into the great brass ball that is on the top of the dome and was told that in it nine men can stand.

But this story sermon is not about St. Peter's but about a single door in the great vestibule of that great church. If you go there to-day you will see only the place where there ought to be a door. It is walled up and marked with a cross. It is called the Porta Sancta, or the

Holy Door. It is opened only once in twenty-five years. Four times in a century the door is opened and through it the Pope and all his cardinals pass in all their robes of state. Four times in a century the Pope approaches it with a little silver hammer. He knocks three times and then the door suddenly opens, and he and his cardinals enter, followed by the great multitude of waiting people and they pass on into the great church to worship and to pray.

Some of them never entered through that door before. Some will never enter that way again. Twenty-five years is a long period and before the time comes round again very many of them will be gone from earth forever.

The door that leads into the presence of God is always open. Perhaps that is why people forget to pray. Suppose the door of prayer were opened only once in twenty-five years. how eager we would be to crowd through that open door and make our wants known to God! Suppose we could go to God only once or twice in a whole life time, how glad would we be when the time came! And now when the door is always open we forget. Suppose God closed the door and said he was too busy to hear our prayer! That would be terrible. But God is not like that. The door to him is always open and if it seems closed he tells us to knock

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and it shall be opened. God never closes the door. It is we who close the door. I heard of a little girl who said, "Mother, it's no use telling me about Santa Claus, or about the good things I am going to get at Christmas, for up in heaven they think I'm dead." Her mother was shocked and said, "Dear, dear, what do you mean?" "Well," said she, "I haven't said my prayers for a week, so they must think in heaven that I'm dead." I think the little girl was right. Prayer is a sign of life. Not to pray is to stand before a closed door.

XVIII

THE TIMBER LINE

"The child grew."—MATT. 2:40.

DID you ever notice how the Bible speaks about Jesus? Some of the old books nearly as old as the Bible speak of him as a child who worked miracles and as one different from other children. The Bible always pictures him as like other children. This verse tells us that he "grew." I like to think how he looked when he was just three years old and then how he looked when he was five, and then eleven, and then twelve and then seventeen. The Bible pictures him as a fine, healthy, normal boy, growing like other boys in height and weight and health.

Why should he not grow? Boys like plants and trees grow when they find the right soil and the right atmosphere. Do you know what atmosphere is? It is made up of sunshine and rain and fresh air and dew and the fragrance of flowers and the shadows cast by clouds, and the distance from the equator and the height above the sea. That of course is what atmos-

phere means for flowers and plants and trees. What does it mean for boys and girls? Well, the atmosphere in which boys and girls grow best is made up of love and play and books and home and church and music, and friendship and prayer and God. You see, wealth and big houses and automobiles and balloons have nothing to do with atmosphere. And Jesus grew because his atmosphere was made up of love and play and books and home and church and music and friendship and God.

Have you ever watched the trees on the side of a great mountain? I do not mean a mountain like one sees among the Allegheny range, for those mountains have trees growing up the hillside to the very top. I mean one of the mountain peaks of the Rockies. At its foot, the forest grows and far up the mountain, the trees are large and tall but as you go up and up towards the top, they get smaller and shorter and after awhile there are no trees at all, and the mountain top is just bare rock. There seems to be a line beyond which the trees do not grow. It is called "the timber line." There the atmosphere changes and beyond the timber line one finds only struggling little stunted shrubs. Beyond the timber line, the air is too chill, too thin and the summers too short for trees to grow. A student of trees

and shrubs found far up the mountain a little tree, just two inches high. If it had been below the timber line, it would have been a forest giant. When it was examined under the microscope, twenty-eight rings were counted, which means that it was twenty-eight years old. In twenty-eight years it had grown only two inches! The fault lay not in the seed, nor in the tree, but in the atmosphere.

We do not blame the tree. It could not help itself. But we blame boys and girls, who are satisfied to live in an atmosphere where they cannot grow. To grow into good men and women, boys and girls need the atmosphere of home and school and church and prayer. In this atmosphere they will "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

XIX

THE PREACHER AND THE KING

"Preach the Word."—2 TIM. 4:2.

ALEXANDER McLAREN was one of the great preachers of England. For fifty years he preached from the same pulpit in the city of Manchester, and people from all over the world went there to hear him preach. His sermons may be found wherever the English language is spoken.

He used to say the making of good sermons was such a hard and difficult work that when he began to prepare a sermon he would put on his strong out-of-door boots, because then he would feel he was busy with a hard and trying task. I have heard of preachers making sermons with their slippers on and lying on a couch, but Alexander McLaren put on his big heavy boots when he made his fine sermons.

It is a wonderful thing to be a preacher even though all preachers cannot be like Alexander McLaren. His preaching was so wonderful and so helpful that not only people from all over England and America went to hear him,

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but the King of England was interested and sent for him. What would you think if the King or the President sent for you? We expect statesmen and politicians and business men and college Presidents to be sent for, but we would scarcely expect the King or the President to send for a preacher!

But the king did send for him and the preacher went to see the king. When he came to the royal palace he was taken right in to the presence of King Edward VII and the king told him how happy he was to see him and how glad he was that he was preaching the Gospel of Jesus to the people. Alexander McLaren was then an old man, but he went back from the palace to his own pulpit younger and happier because the king knew that he was serving not only God but the people of England and of the world, when he was preaching the Gospel.

It is a great thing to be a preacher of the Gospel. I wonder if any of the boys who are listening to this story purpose in their hearts to be preachers. Some day our King will call us before him and how happy we will be if he tells us that he is grateful to us because we have told others the story of Jesus. Some one has said that God had only one son and he made him a minister. I want the boys to think

about that and to think about Alexander McLaren who merited the king's favour because he was a preacher. And he found favour because he was true to Jesus. He preached not for the sake of preaching, but in order to win men to believe in the Gospel and to turn from their sins. It is said of Cicero the great orator of Rome that when he spoke people said, "What a fine orator is Cicero!" but when Demosthenes the orator of Greece spoke the people said, "Let us go and fight Philip." Philip was the enemy of Greece and the people were not merely pleased with the fine sentences of Demosthenes but they were stirred to action and deeds of valour. The reason why King Edward VII was interested in the preaching of Alexander McLaren was not on account of his fine words and beautiful sentences but because his preaching changed men's lives and led them to God. If you are going to be a preacher be a real preacher and not merely one of words.

XX

BUILDING A LIFE

"A wise man who built his house."—MATT. 7:24.

JESUS was a builder. He was a carpenter, and he knew how to build well. He knew what good material meant, and he knew that every house must have a good foundation. A well-built house must rest not upon shifting sand, but upon solid rock.

It is easier, however, to build a house than it is to build a life. Writing from Africa to his sister, David Livingstone once said: "Oh, Janet, know thou that if thou art given to building castles in the air, that it is easy work to erecting cottages on the ground." But both castles in the air and cottages on the ground are easy work compared to building a true life. A true life must be built with a good foundation, of good material, by a good workman, and after the plan of a good architect.

Jesus is a builder. He builds lives. He knows how to make a good, true, strong life. If we follow his plan we will build well. Emerson, who was one of America's wise men,

tells us that once when he was visiting in New Hampshire he found a large building going up in a country town. He noticed that it was a sort of hit-and-miss affair, without any plan. He asked the man who was working on it the name of the architect who had planned it. The workman replied, "Oh, there isn't any architect settled on as yet. I'm just building it, you see, and there's a man coming from Boston next month to put the architecture into it." There are a great many boys and girls who are building their lives just like that. They think that they can throw their days and years together in a sort of hit-and-miss, planless way, and then sometime, somewhere, somebody will come along and put the architecture into their lives. They expect that somehow or other, in some strange way, they will fall upon fortune, but it cannot be done. It is too late to put the architecture in after a building or a life is built. It is too late to plan one's life after a boy has become a man.

Do not try to build your life around your own plan. Follow the plan of Jesus. He is the great Master-builder, and he has a plan for your life. It is all right for you to dream about what you will be and do when you grow up to be men and women. Every boy and girl dreams. I wonder if you know the verses

—there are about ten of them—which run something like this:

“When I’m a man, a man,
I’ll be a carpenter, if I can—and I can!
I’ll plane like this, and I’ll hammer so,
And this is the way my saw shall go.
I’ll make bird-houses, and sleds and boats,
And a ship that shall race every craft that floats,
When I’m a man.

“When I’m a man, a man,
A doctor I’ll be, if I can—and I can!
My powders and pills shall be nice and sweet,
And you shall have just what you like to eat;
I’ll prescribe for you riding, and sailing, and such;
And, ’bove all things, you must never study too much,
When I’m a man.

“When I’m a man, a man,
I’ll be a minister, if I can—and I can!
And once in a while a sermon I’ll make
That will keep little boys and girls awake;
For ah, dear me! if the ministers knew
How glad we are when they get through!—
When I’m a man.”

We must build our lives not around dreams only, but around the plan and purpose of Jesus for our lives. The great city of London once burned down. Fire swept over the city and burned itself out. It was over three hundred years ago and in those days the houses were made of wood and there was no fire department such as we have to-day. When the fire had spent itself, the people began to plan for the rebuilding of the city. The old city had had narrow twisted streets and they thought

it would be fine if the new city had straight wide streets. So they got a great architect, Sir Christopher Wren, to plan the new city, and he did plan it and St. Paul's Cathedral was to be the centre of it, and great wide, beautiful streets were to run from all directions and lead up to the Cathedral. Everybody was pleased, but the new city was never built. The people would not build on the new plan. They preferred to build on the old plan because each person wanted to build his own new house on the same land and in the same place where his old house had been. It is a mistake to build life on selfishness. Build it rather after the plan of Jesus who builds not merely for time but for eternity.

XXI

LISTENING TO GOD

"Ears to hear."—REV. 2:29.

DID you ever think why you have only one mouth? You have two ears and two hands and two eyes and two feet, and only one mouth. Did you ever think about it? Two feet to walk with, and two hands to work with and two eyes to see with and two ears to hear with. But *you* have only one mouth. I guess it means that we should listen twice as much as we should talk. A great physician said the other day that we would be less nervous if we talked less. There is an old saying to the effect that speech is silver but silence is golden. God means us to be silent in his presence, so that we can hear what he would say unto us.

The other day I heard a story about two little girls. They lived in the same home and they were sisters. One of these little girls was called Rachel and she was eight years old. The other was called Esther and she was six years old. When a mother calls a girl by a Bible name she is apt to give a Bible name also

to one of the other girls. One day Rachel was calling Esther and Esther did not want to listen and just like little girls do, she put her hands over her ears so she could not hear. Rachel kept on calling and calling and speaking louder and louder until she was nearly screaming into little Esther's hand-covered ears. When she could stand it no longer, Esther said, "Don't call any louder, Rachel, for I can't hear you anyway." Now, what do you think of that? She had heard all the time, but pretended she had not and so would not answer. She had ears but she did not hear for, after all, it is not the ear that hears but the heart.

I wonder if God sometimes calls to us and we put our hands over our ears. You remember how he called to the little boy Samuel and Samuel answered, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." God speaks to us through our teachers and our parents and friends. He speaks to us when we pray and he speaks to us through conscience which tells us what to do and what not to do. We should always quickly answer as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

"O give me Samuel's heart,
A lowly heart, that waits
Where in Thy house Thou art,
Or watches at Thy gates;

By day and night, a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of Thy will."

Recently the Warden of Sing Sing Penitentiary—you know, I suppose, what Sing Sing is? It sounds as if it might be a music hall, but it is not—well, the Warden of Sing Sing Penitentiary once said that he trembled to hear a boy say, "I won't," for he felt that that boy was headed for the Penitentiary. If there was ever a boy who might have been excused from obedience, it was Jesus. He knew more than his parents did. His mother did not understand him. He spoke strange words, and his life was a great mystery even to her. Most boys think they know more than their parents, but Jesus, you know, was the most wonderful boy that ever lived. It is written about him that when he was a little child, just a little lad, that he lived at Nazareth in his parents' home, and that he was obedient to them. The verse says, "He was subject to them," and if we just say that he lived in Nazareth and was obedient to his parents, we get a picture of his life, which is full of beauty and full of promise.

God has given us ears so that we may hear him and answer him and obey him.

XXII

THE GLADDEST DAY OF THE YEAR

"He is Risen."—MATT. 28:6.

THE gladdest day of the year is Easter Day. I asked a little lad of five years why Easter Day is the gladdest, happiest day of the year and he said, "Because it is Springtime!" The little lad was right. Easter is Springtime, not only in the world outside, but also in our hearts. It is the day of all days when we like to sing and to hear singing, rather than to preach and to hear sermons.

Easter is the day when Jesus rose from the dead. On Good Friday he hung upon the cruel cross. All day Saturday his body lay in the new grave in Joseph's garden. Sunday morning before the birds began to sing Jesus awoke and stepping out of the grave, walked in the garden and waited for his friends to meet and greet him again. This is why we sing so gladly, "Christ the Lord is Risen To-day, Hallelujah."

Rising from the dead is more common than

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we think. Out in the world we see things that seem to rise from the dead. After their long winter sleep, the trees and flowers wake up and come out of their deep, dark hiding place.

Did you ever see a sleepy old caterpillar crawling lazily along the ground with its brown or black fur coat and its hairy hands and feet? It crawls for a little while and then it falls asleep. After awhile it wakes up and creeps along a little further and then sleeps again. It is old and slow and so sleepy that at last it does not wake up but sleeps and never moves. It draws the covers over it to keep warm, and then settles down to sleep a long, long sleep. It wraps itself up in what is called a cocoon. This cocoon looks just like a coffin and the old caterpillar looks as if it were dead. It never moves. It lies in its self-made grave for weeks and months until it is forgotten. But God does not forget it and after a long, long sleep it begins to wake up. The covers fall off and when it really wakes up, what a strange new thing it is. It no longer creeps and crawls. It has wings and flies. Instead of being brown or black or grey, it is a glorious thing of beauty, perhaps red or white or blue or orange or yellow or scarlet, and like something that will never grow old, it flits about from flower to

flower. Yes, it is a butterfly! But before its Easter Day, it was a sleepy old caterpillar.

And now let me ask you a question. How did it come about that the caterpillar rose, as it were, from the dead? You say God did it. And I say, yes, God did it and God raised Jesus from the dead. But how did God do it? Well, it was because the caterpillar was not dead at all. It was only sleeping. It had life in it all the time. And so it was with Jesus. He was not dead. His spirit had been with God and when God chose he called him back to life. Jesus is called "The Prince of Life." He cannot die. He lives forever. And because he lives, we too shall live with him. That is why Easter Day is the gladdest day of the year when nature sings and angels sing and we too sing. And this is the song we sing:—

"Hymns of praise then let us sing
Unto Christ our heavenly King,
Who endured the cross and grave,
Sinners to redeem and save,
Alleluia."

XXIII

PUSSY WANTS A CORNER

"Boys and girls playing."—ZECH. 8: 5.

SOME day when you wish to ask your father a question, ask him to tell you the names of the games he used to play when he was a boy.

Perhaps he will tell you about some games you do not know. He may tell you about "shinny" and "peg-in-the-hole" and "rag" and "duck-on-the-rock," and you will be interested in hearing what good times the boys of long ago used to have over games you do not know about and you will also be surprised that most of the games your father played are the same games that you are playing. But I think the most interesting thing of all is that the games our fathers and grandfathers and grandmothers played are just the games they are still playing, with this difference,—then they played in fun but now they play in earnest.

First of all, there is the game of "Pussy wants a Corner." You know how to play that

game. There are four corners and five or six boys and girls. There are more children playing pussy than there are corners and that is the game and a fine game it is. How boys and girls scramble for a corner just as they scramble for a chair when they play "Going to Jerusalem!" And that is just what we do all through life. There always seems to be too few places for too many people and each of us races and scrambles to win one of the favoured places.

Then there is "Hide and Seek," or "I spy." That is a good game to play in the evening, just as the dark is drifting down and the shadows help to hide us. We can hide behind trees, or up in the branches, or behind stones, or in ditches or in wood piles, or stand still beside a fence post and never move and the seeker looks and looks and never finds us. And it is the game grown-up men and women still play, for they too are seeking for hidden things, for treasures hard to find, for learning, or position, for power or friendship, for some one to help or some good thing to do. It is a game that is as old as the world.

It would take me hours to tell you about all the children's games. There is "London Bridge" and "Hide the Handkerchief" and "Blindman's Buff" and "Pump-pump-pull

away." But the best of all the games we play, either as boys and girls or as men and women is "Prisoner's Base." You know how to play "Prisoner's Base." It is something like "Tag" and is played in many ways in many lands. You choose sides and have a "home base" in which all those on your side are safe. The other side has a "home base" too and, if they stay there, they are safe. But John runs out over the line and Jane from the other side runs out after him and if she "tags" him before he gets "home," he is her prisoner. So the game goes on faster and faster with laughing and cheering until perhaps only George is left on one side and all his companions are prisoners. But George is swift and fleet of foot and he wins back John and Betty and Tom and when it looks as if John and Betty and Tom will be caught again, George runs between them and their pursuers and the enemy has to leave chasing them and run after George who is too fast for them and so after awhile George has won the game for his side. It is a very exciting but friendly game. We cannot play it alone. We need strong friends and helpers. And that is true out in the big game of life where our fathers and mothers are. They cannot play the game of life alone and when our turn comes, we too cannot play it alone. We

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need friends and helpers. Above all, we need a friend who is strong and sure. Such a true, strong friend is Jesus. We can always count on him. If we lose all and have him, we can still win. He always wins. He never loses, and we are his friends, for he himself said:—

“I have called you friends.”

XXIV

WHEN LINCOLN FAILED

"He shall not fail."—ISA. 42:4.

THERE is an old saying to the effect that "Nothing succeeds like success."

There is much truth in those words. A big city becomes bigger. A rich man becomes richer. A strong boy becomes stronger. Even Jesus once said, "To him that hath shall be given."

Suppose however, instead of saying, "Nothing succeeds like success," we were to say, "Nothing succeeds like failure." Would that be true? You would surely say, "Oh! No, that cannot be true." But it is true, and I will show you how it is true.

Every one will agree with me when I say that Abraham Lincoln was a great success. He was one of America's greatest men. Indeed, he was one of the world's greatest men. A great British statesman recently said that the face of Abraham Lincoln is the only face known to all the world. And yet Abraham Lincoln came to his success through failure.

A great poet has said that failure is like a "stepping stone" to success, and an American poet has said that

"We rise by the things that are under our feet."

When he was a young man, Abraham Lincoln became a candidate for the legislature in Illinois and was defeated by a large majority. He failed. He entered business, failed and spent seventeen years of his life paying the debts of a worthless partner. He fell in love with a beautiful young woman to whom he became engaged and when life seemed to smile upon him, she died. He became a candidate for Congress and was badly defeated. He sought an appointment from the Government in connection with the United States Land Office but failed in his effort.

He became a candidate for the United States Senate and was again completely defeated and again he faced failure. In 1856 he became a candidate for the Vice-Presidency of the United States and again he experienced failure and defeat, and later Douglas defeated him in his political campaign in Illinois.

His life was just one failure after another. He was defeated again and again, but he never gave up. He made every failure a stepping-stone to success. He knew he was right and

he never allowed failure to discourage him, and at last his path led him to the White House, and to the supreme place in the hearts of all the people.

Lincoln was always true to God, true to the people, true to himself, and because of this he made failure the pathway to success. This is what Tennyson meant when he said :

"I hold it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

This is why Isaiah, the prophet, in speaking of the coming Saviour, said :

"He shall not fail
Nor be discouraged."

And we all know how Jesus made failure into success and the cross a stepping-stone to glory.

XXV

THE SIGHTS OF A GREAT CITY

"I saw the Holy City."—REV. 21:2.

THE text says, "I saw the Holy City." That is the most wonderful thing I ever heard. I have heard about people seeing the Alps, and the Rocky Mountains, and Yellowstone Park, and London and Paris, and Niagara and Gibraltar, but I never heard before of any one seeing the Holy City. You know what the Holy City is, do you not? It is the City where God has his home and where all his dear children expect to be some day. The Holy City is heaven.

The man who said he saw the Holy City must have been a very good and a very happy man. I am not so sure about his being happy, but I am sure he was good. Do you think a man who was in prison could be happy? This man's name was John and he was in prison. And in such a strange prison! He was on an island—a very lonely island out in the sea, where he had only the wild waves for music and the seagulls for friends. The name of the

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island was called Patmos, and John was put there by a bad and wicked king, because he loved the Lord Jesus.

While he was there, all alone, listening to the waves beating against the rocks, he saw the Holy City and he tried to tell us what it was like. I expect he told only half of what he saw, for you know when you see something very beautiful you can't tell other people what it is like, for they too must see it for themselves. You can't make people see Niagara, or the mountains, or London or New York or Paris or Pekin—they must see it for themselves. John, however, told us enough about the Holy City to make us very curious. Some day we want to see it for ourselves.

Once when I was going from Canada to Chicago, the newsboy went through the train crying, "Chicago Street Guide. Tells you all about the streets. It will show you where you want to go and the places you ought to see." Quite a few people bought the little book. I suppose they were strangers and wanted to know how to get about in the great strange city. That was what I did when I first went to Chicago. No one travels in a strange country without a guide or a guide book. Without a guide book we might lose our way.

I often wonder if some of us will not be

lost in the Holy City. God has given us a guide book, but I am afraid some of us have not studied it so that we will be familiar with its strange people and places. It tells us where the City is and how to get a Guide and by what road to travel. It tells us about its streets and its walls and its gates and its glory. It tells us about the language and the customs of the people and the wonderful music of its orchestra and the singing of its choir. It tells us about the clean white robes and the wonderful Saviour whose beauty turns the night into one long day. If you want to see the City don't forget to study the guide book.

Of course the guide book is the Bible. Perhaps you know the words of the hymn,—
"Holy Bible Faithful Guide." If you know the Bible, then you know Jesus, you know God and you know something about the Holy City.

You know there are sixty-six books in the Bible and one who loved the Bible has written these verses about these sixty-six books.

"Sixty-six singers, singing sweet and true,
And setting all the world to singing too.

"Sixty-six soldiers, vigorous and strong,
Valiantly attacking cruelty and wrong.

"Sixty-six judges, learned in the law,
Uttering decisions free from fear or flaw.

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"Sixty-six artists—wondrously they paint
Kings and sages, common folk, angel, devil, saint.

"Sixty-six explorers, keen to search and find
All the hidden secrets of life and death and mind.

"Sixty-six masons, marvellously skilled;
One majestic temple they unite to build.

"Sixty-six farmers, planting holy seed,
Happily upspringing in holy thought and deed.

"Sixty-six teachers, keeping perfect school,
Where faith the law is, and love the rule.

"Sixty-six doctors, knowing well to cure,
Masters of a medicine healing swift and sure.

"Sixty-six sailors, bearing us away
To a better country, to a brighter day."

XXVI

THE PUZZLE GARDEN

"Gardens and Parks."—SONG OF SOL. 2:5.

DID you ever hear of a Puzzle Garden? Certainly not! Whoever heard of a puzzle garden? We know all about flower gardens and vegetable gardens and old-fashioned gardens and even about rock gardens and sunken gardens where roses and all sorts of beautiful flowers grow, but whoever heard of a puzzle garden!

Well, I want to tell you about a real puzzle garden, for even if you have never heard of such a thing as a puzzle garden, there is such a thing, only it is not always called a puzzle garden. Sometimes it is called a maze and long, long ago they called it a labyrinth.

In olden times when the old Greek stories were born, they often spoke of a wonderful labyrinth or maze, or puzzle garden, in the Island of Crete, and you can read in a fairy story book about the strange and terrible puzzle garden and the awful monster, half man and half beast, that lived there and how The-

seus, the Greek Prince, with the help of Ariadne and her silken thread, killed the monster. But that is another story.

I have seen puzzle gardens or mazes made of looking glasses in which you can get lost easily and wander round and round, coming again and again face to face with yourself. If you go to London, to a place called Hampton Court, you will find a real puzzle garden. It too is a maze and in it lots of people get lost. They go in through the gate and follow the path for a little way and then they turn and turn again and turn again and then they go on and turn and turn again and then when they want to get out, they cannot find the gate and they go round and round in the garden, trying to solve the puzzle and get out.

It is all very interesting and very often little children and even men and women get all "fussed" about it, and become excited and impatient and then the more they try, the more perplexed they become. It is not very large but they get lost in it and cannot find their way out. When they are just ready to give up, they hear a voice saying, "Right, left, left, right," as they come to each turn in the path, and obeying the voice, they soon find themselves out in the open and free from the puzzle garden. Then they look up and see a man

in a tower above the garden who has been watching them all the time and it was his voice that guided them out into freedom.

I often think that life is just like a puzzle garden. The path winds and winds and many boys and girls lose their way. No boy or girl is safe in the maze of life without a guide. We have many guides. They are always watching us. Our parents, our teachers, our friends guide us. They are always watching and their voices are ever warning us. And we always have one true, sure guide. Jesus is our guide. When we are in danger of losing our way, it is his voice we hear. Like the guide in the tower, he too calls, "Right, left, forward." Following him we find security and freedom. There is a verse of a familiar hymn which says:

"While life's dark maze I tread,
And griefs around me spread,
Be Thou my Guide."

John Bunyan began his story of "The Pilgrim's Progress" by speaking of this world as "the wilderness," and you will remember that Christian often lost his way but was always guided safely back into the path. Jesus is our guide. He sees all. He knows all and if we will hear his voice and follow him we too will come at last to the Palace Beautiful.

XXVII

IF YOU BECAME PRESIDENT

"All the presidents."—DANIEL 6:7.

EACH new President of the United States takes what is called an "Oath of Office." He makes a solemn promise that he will be true to the laws of the country and uphold the government of the United States. And this is the way he makes his promise, or as we say, takes his "oath." He stands before the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court and having given his assent to the words of the "oath," he kisses the Bible as a pledge that the promise he has made will be to him as sacred as the Bible itself.

Suppose you were to become President, what text or passage in the Bible would you choose as the place your lips would touch? That is worth thinking about for there is perhaps some boy not so far away who may some day be made President. I was going to say some boy or girl, for who knows, now that women are managing our politics, whether or not some day we may not have a woman President!

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Well, what text would you choose on the great day of your inauguration?

In order to help you, let me tell you some of the texts that have been chosen by the men who have been Presidents.

I will start with President Harding. When he became President on March 4, 1921, the Bible lay open at the Old Testament and the place was in the Book of Micah. Do you know where to find the Book of Micah? Is it one of the Major or one of the Minor Prophets? When he kissed the page it was at the eighth verse of chapter six and these are the words:—

“What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

It is a wonderful text. Tennyson called it the greatest definition of religion in the world.

Before President Harding came President Wilson. He was twice President. The first time he chose Psalm 119:43-48, which begins:—

“And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.”

When he became President the second time he took as his guiding message Psalm 46, known as Luther's Psalm, whose great words are familiar to all of us.

“God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.”

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Can you tell who preceded Woodrow Wilson as President? No! It was not Roosevelt. Yes! It was William H. Taft, and his mind turned to the interesting passage that tells that when Solomon was made king and was asked of God what he most of all desired, he said, "Wisdom." You must read that beautiful story. And these are the words of Mr. Taft's text as found in 1 Kings 3:9-11.

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

We have had the texts of three Presidents and they have been all from the Old Testament. Now we come to Theodore Roosevelt who was twice President, and he chose a text from the New Testament, James 1:22-23.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers, only, deceiving your own selves."

These words are just like him. He was a doer of the word.

This story sermon will be all too long if I keep on telling about all the President's texts, but I will mention one or two more.

Next comes William McKinley who also was twice President and his second text was Proverbs 16:20:—

"He that handled a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he."

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The next President was Grover Cleveland. His first text was from Psalm 112: 1-6:—

"Surely he shall not be moved forever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

His second passage was from Psalm 91: 12-16:—

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."

I will give only one more, the text of General Grant, but sometime again I would like to tell you about Lincoln and Washington. General Grant kissed the Bible at Isaiah 11: 2-3:—

"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

This is a great and a beautiful text for a President to choose.

So you see if you are going to be President, one of the first things you must do is to know the Bible. The Bible is the President's Text Book. And now just suppose you were to become President—just suppose! What text would you choose? If I were to become President, I would choose, . . . well! but I can never be President and so I must leave you to choose.

XXXVIII

THE BEST PART OF THE STORY

"He must rise again."—JOHN 20:9.

HE was a newsboy. His name was Thomas Moore. It was a good name and Tom was a good boy. He had not had much of a chance, for he had been knocked about from house to house ever since his mother died and at last he called the News-boys' Home his home. He was happy there and every Sunday he went to the Sunday School held in the gymnasium and liked it.

He had been selling his papers on Good Friday and had done well. The day was spring-like and everybody seemed to be feeling happy and many people were on their way to and from church. He had finished early and had turned his face homeward when a picture in a window caught his eye. It was a picture of Jesus on the cross. He looked at it for a long time and wished he could own it and have it hanging in his room. But the pennies in his pocket would never pay for the price of such a wonderful painting.

While he was still looking, but just about to go, a smart-looking business man stopped beside him and he too looked at the picture. Tom had seen the man and knew that he was one of the greatest bankers in the city. But that made no difference. He spoke right up and said, "That's a picture of Jesus, Mister." The man nodded and Tom said, "Them men there are soldiers. They are Roman soldiers." The man made no reply and again Tom said, "That place is Calvary. That's the place where they killed him." The man by this time was interested in the little boy and said, "Where did you learn that, son?" and Tom told him how he had learned it in the Newsboys' Sunday School.

Now it happened that the man was a Director in the Newsboys' Home, but he did not know about the Sunday School, neither did he care much about it, but for some reason as he went away he was very thoughtful. Perhaps because it was Good Friday, or perhaps because of Tom's interested and eager face. He had not gone very far till he felt a hand on his sleeve, and looking down saw Tom, who said, "Say, Mister. I nearly forgot to tell you the best part of the story." "What is that?" said the man. "That he rose again," said Tom with a wonderful light in his face.

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I do not know what happened after that. I like to think that the man bought that wonderful picture and hung it in the Newsboys' Home and that he became interested both in Tom and in the Sunday School. I do know, however, that Tom told his story well and that he did not forget the best part. For we would not dare to call the day on which Jesus was crucified Good Friday, if it had not been followed by an Easter Day. The first Easter brought gladness and every Easter Day brings joy, and this is the story of the first Easter:

"When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had said this, he showed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord."

Jesus means us to think of Easter in connection with the Cross, for Jesus did not die to be laid in a grave. He died to rise again and what happened to Jesus will happen to us if we love him and live for him. One of his great names is "The Resurrection and the Life."

XXIX

HEARING AND THEN SEEING

"He calleth thee."—MARK 10: 49.

HE was blind. That was very, very sad. He had never seen the flowers or the birds, or the sky, or his mother's face. He was not only blind but he was poor and that made it still more sad. He was a beggar. His home was in Jericho and there all the people knew him. They called him Bartimæus, but it was hardly a name, for "Bar" means son, and so his name meant that he was the son of a man named Timæus.

One day he was sitting by the side of the road, begging, when Jesus and his disciples were passing along the road on their way to Jerusalem. Now Bartimæus had heard of Jesus and was told that he had made blind men to see, and when Jesus drew near, Bartimæus called to him, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." The people tried to silence him but he only cried the louder, and at last Jesus heard him and called him to him. How did he find Jesus? Did some one lead him

or did he find Jesus himself? Perhaps he followed the sound of Jesus' voice.

I remember being in Toronto one day when there was a great gathering of Boy Scouts. You know what a Boy Scout is. He is very smart and very brave. Well, there were about ten thousand boy scouts in a great park and they were all blind. Not really blind, but they had been all blindfolded. They were playing a game. They were scattered all over the park and then the Scout Master who stood on a little hill, blew a whistle and the boys started to find him. He always stayed at the same place and every now and then he would blow the whistle. It was great fun to watch the boys. A few went straight up to him. Some wandered back and forth over the park, running into fences and trees, but all at last found the Scout Master. He was very patient. There was one little fellow who had wandered about so much that he was tired and ready to give up. He was the last to find the Master, but he did find him at last for the whistle seemed to blow louder and louder and faster and faster and I half think the wise Scout Master left his place and took two or three steps towards the little fellow as he came blindfolded up the hill.

Perhaps Bartimæus found Jesus in the same way, only Bartimæus followed the voice. The

disciples came to him saying, "He calleth thee," and perhaps Jesus kept on calling and perhaps he too came toward Bartimæus until the blind man found the Master and received from him the blessed gift of sight.

If we listen, we too may hear Jesus calling us. We cannot see him, but he calls us and we can hear him. He calls us every time we read the Bible, every time we pray, every time some one in need asks us for help.

XXX

THE THREE CHOICES

"I offer thee three things: choose.—2 SAM. 24: 12.

GOD gave David the choice of three things. It was a choice of seven years of famine, or three months of exile, or three days of plague. What terrible things to choose! To choose any one was to make a bad choice. David chose the plague and there died of the plague 70,000 men.

We are not asked to make such an awful choice. We have always the chance to choose the lovely and the good. You remember the Bible says something like this,—“I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life.” You see, we must choose, but the choice is between good and evil, life and death.

I know another story in a wonderful book about another choice of one of three things.

It is in a story book which some day you must all read. It was written by a great man named William Shakespeare and it is just a little story inside of a bigger story. The big

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story is called "The Merchant of Venice." I see by your looks that some of you know about it already.

The little story is about Portia. Portia was a sweet and beautiful young lady whom all the young men of the country wanted to marry. But Portia was wise and was willing to wait. Her old father when he died made a will and promised his fortune to the man who would choose Portia after the plan which he wrote out in his will. It was such a strange odd plan, and this is what it was :—Portia was to put her portrait in one of three jewel caskets and the young man who chose the casket in which she had put the portrait should be Portia's husband.

The first casket was made of pure gold and had this motto written on it:

"Who chooseth me shall get
What many men desire."

The second casket was made of silver and had this motto:

"Who chooseth me shall get
As much as he deserves."

The third casket was made of lead and had this motto:

"Who chooseth me must give
And hazard all he hath."

It is a very pretty story. The first one to choose was the Prince of Morocco and of

course he chose the casket of gold and found it empty. The Duke of Aragon came next and he chose the silver one, but Portia's portrait was not in it. The third young man was Bassanio and he was secretly in love with Portia. He read the motto on the casket of lead,—

"Who chooseth me must give
And hazard all he hath."

And something in his heart told him that it was right to choose the lead, and when it was opened he was overjoyed to find in it the portrait of Portia.

These are life's three choices, the casket of gold is wealth, the casket of silver is fame, the casket of lead is service. The one who chooses either the gold or the silver chooses "to get." Their motto is "Who chooseth me shall *get*." The one who chooses the lead, chooses to give—"Who chooseth me shall *give*."

When Jesus came into the world, he chose to give and he came to give his life. The greatest of all the verses of the Bible says, "God so loved the world that he *gave*." The secret of a happy life is not to get but to give.

XXXI

THE LITTLE FOXES

"The little foxes."—SONG OF SOL. 2: 15.

SOME years ago when living in the heart of the great city of Chicago, I looked out of the window and could hardly believe that my eyes told the truth. What do you think I saw? No. It was not a cow nor a sheep, nor a flock of pigeons, nor an elephant, nor a dog. It was a fox. I had seen foxes in the woods and in the Zoo, but here was a little, small, sly, sneaking, red fox in the heart of the great city. I opened the door quietly and tried to get near it but it never waited even to look at me, for in a moment, like a flash of lightning, it was gone. You wonder where it came from. Well, I will tell you. Near where I lived, there was a Zoo, and somehow or other that little sly, sneaky fox had slipped out and was taking a daylight stroll up and down the streets and in and out of the back yards of the city of Chicago.

After it had gone I began to think about it and how sly and cunning it looked, and I re-

membered how the Bible speaks about the little foxes that sneaked into the vineyards and destroyed the vines when they were young and tender. And I recalled how Jesus spoke of Herod the King as a "fox," because of his sly, tricky and deceitful ways.

Well, we are not troubled with foxes now, and if we want to see one, we must go to the Zoo where they are quiet and harmless and so tame that the children can almost touch them.

Foxes are always sly and tricky and not all foxes are in Zoos or out in the woods. There are many little foxes which have odd queer names and ways and get into children's gardens and destroy the vines upon which grow the fruit of love and faith and goodness.

Let me tell you the names of some of these little foxes that hurt the lives of little children. There is the little fox we call "Bad Temper." It is a snarly, sulky, nasty little fox. It hurts the happiness of other children and casts a cloud over the sky in our own homes. And then there is the little fox called "Deceit." It is a sly, sneaky little fox. It tries not to be seen. It hides itself, but it is mean and selfish and unkind. "Lying" is another fox. I think it is the worst of all. There is nothing that will destroy and ruin a boy or

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a girl quicker than untruthfulness. Whatever happens, tell the truth. Great men have died rather than tell a lie. Learn these words by heart.

"Dare to be true.
Nothing can need a lie.
The fault that needs it most
Grows two thereby."

There are many other little foxes—a whole pack of them,—“Cheating” is the name of one, and “Cowardice” the name of another. There is one particularly sly fox called “Irreverence” that destroys not only boys and girls but men and women. You can name a dozen more yourself. So you must be on the watch, and if you succeed in keeping out the little fox called “Lying,” that destroys the vine of truth, I have good hopes that the other little foxes will not have much chance in your garden.

XXXII

A LITTLE BABY AND A GRASS- HOPPER

"And the grasshopper."—ECCL. 12:5.

HE was chasing a grasshopper and he found a baby. That is queer. Yes, it is queer, but it is true. I do not know the boy's name who chased the grasshopper, but I do know the name of the baby. It happened many, many years, more than three hundred years ago, and this is the story.

A little lad was coming home from school along a country road. It was summer time and I expect he was barefooted and bare headed and happy hearted. He chased the birds and the butterflies and at last started after a grasshopper. My, how it did jump! You know grasshoppers are nearly all legs. But the boy was quick and as it jumped quicker and quicker he ran faster and faster. To escape him, it leaped over the fence and over the fence he followed. But he did not follow far, for there lying close to the fence was a heap of clothes and out of the clothes peered

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a little baby's face. It did not cry. It just looked and looked at the boy as much as to say, "Why have you been so long coming?" No one ever knew where the baby came from or to whom it belonged, but when the boy saw it, right then it belonged to him and he gathered it up in his arms and took it home to his mother.

The little child was, of course, nameless. No one knew where it had come from, but the little barefoot boy's mother became the mother of the little fence-corner baby. The baby was a boy and grew into a great and a good man. He became rich and powerful and served his country so well that he was knighted and he is known in history by the honorable name of Sir Thomas Gresham.

The little boy had chased a grasshopper and the grasshopper led him to where the little baby lay in the fence corner. Once, long ago, God led the shepherds by a star to where the child Jesus lay in the manger at Bethlehem. God can use a star or a grasshopper to guide men and children in the way of his will.

If you ever go to London, right in the heart of that great city you will see a large building called the Royal Exchange. It is one of the most important buildings in the world. It was built in honor of Sir Thomas Gresham,

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and if you will look up to the very top of the building you will see not a rooster or a cross, but a grasshopper, and that grasshopper still tells the story of how a grasshopper, guided by God, guided a little boy to a little lost child.

There is a story in the Bible about a little baby boy who was found in a basket by the riverside and a princess found him and he grew up in the palace and became a wise and good and great man. Do you know his name? God has a wonderful way of caring for little children. God needed this little baby boy and so he cared for him and gave him a home, for he had a great work to do in the world. And God needs you. He has some work for you to do. No one can do it but you yourself. Do you know what it is? I do not know. Perhaps you yourself do not know. But God knows and some day you will understand.

XXXIII

THE APOSTLE WHO LOVED CHILDREN

"Love one another."—I JOHN 4:7.

THE text is one which the little children learn in the Beginners' Department of the Sunday School. How short and beautiful it is. "Love one another." Even though it is a short text, it is a very big one, and I know of none so wonderful unless it be another that is very much like it,—*"God is love."*

And the strange thing about it is that both of these wonderful texts were written by the same man. Yet it is not strange, either, for as I said, they are closely related, belonging almost to the same family.

This little text was given to us by a very old man. His name was John, and he lived till he was nearly, if not quite, a hundred years old. When he was a young man, he met Jesus and loved him, and followed him and served him as his disciple through a long, good life. People knew him as the man whom Jesus

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loved, and there is no more beautiful name than that. We are told that when he was very old, so old that he could not preach any more and could hardly walk or see or talk, the people who loved him and loved to see him, would often lead or carry him to the church and lift him into the pulpit so that he could speak to them and they could see him, for you know the sight of a dear, good old minister is much better than a sermon.

When he was in the pulpit, he would look around the church and then lift his hands over the people who loved him, in order to give them his blessing, and he always spoke the words, "Little children, love one another." Every Sunday he spoke these same words and he never would say anything else. He was an old man and all the men and the women and the boys and the girls were just little children to him. "Is that all?" they would say. "Yes," he answered, "that is all. Love one another for love is of God, and if you love God and love one another, you have done everything that God wants you to do."

Well, I might preach all morning to you about this great text. But I have only time to tell you one little story about it. Some time ago in Pennsylvania, there was a terrible accident. A great dam that kept back miles of

water broke, and the terrible flood came down upon the little town that nestled in the valley below the dam. A great many people were drowned, among them a lot of dear little children. Many people were homeless and many lost all they had. A sweet little girl, who lived far away, out in the West, heard her father and mother talking about the children who had lost their homes and their playthings, and she began to think. So one day she sent a letter to that little town where the homeless little children were, and when it was opened, what do you think was in it? I wonder if you could guess? A lot of paper dolls! Yes, paper dolls cut out just like the ones you have at home. And a letter! Yes, a little letter without any name, and this is what it said: "From a little girl to any other little girl who has lost her dolls."

That was a little girl's way of showing her love. She sent what was to her the dearest thing she had—her paper dolls. When she grows up and becomes a girl, she will give something different and when she becomes a woman she will give something still more helpful. Love always gives. It gives service and joy and peace, and above all it gives Jesus and the Gospel to all those who do not know him.

XXXIV

THE LITTLE ANCHOR

"An anchor of the soul."—HEB. 6: 19.

YOU know what an anchor is. It is a great steel beam with two hooks which is let down into the water out of the ship and takes hold of something at the bottom of the sea, and holds the ship from drifting. This man says that he had an anchor for his soul which held him in the storm. Sailors, you know, give their anchors names, and this man gave his anchor a name. He called it "Hope." It was hidden away, as all anchors are, where you can't see them. "Within the veil," he calls it. It was anchored not in the sea, where you can't tell whether it is in sand or on rock or stone, but in heaven, and he knew it held his soul. That is the beautiful way he says his hope in Jesus held him safe.

Some years ago a captain on one of the English vessels sailing in the Ægean Sea, near Turkey, was caught in a storm. He was off a little island that had only an open harbour; that is, no real harbour, but only a place near

the shore, but still in the sea, across which the wind could sweep. He let down the anchor, but the wind blew so fiercely that it began to drag. It could not get hold of the sea bottom. It could get no grip on the sandy soil and was of no help to hold the ship. Another anchor was let down, but it too refused to take hold. Little by little the ship was drifting nearer the shore and soon it would be stranded. There was only one little anchor left and they felt sure it would be of no use. But they let it down into the dark waters and what was their surprise to find the chain tighten. Soon the ship was held fast and by the help of the little anchor outrode the storm.

When they lifted the anchors, the big ones came up easily, for they had never caught on the bottom, but the little one refused to come up. They worked for a long time, and at last up it came. It came very reluctantly and was very heavy. It was clinging to something. Something came up with it. What do you think it was? A rock? No. A big fish? No. A whale? No. A clam shell? No. It was another anchor. The little anchor had caught in the ring of the anchor of a great "man of war" that had been lost there years before, and that was why the little anchor held so firmly. The great anchor of the warship had

found a piece of rock and had gripped it so tightly that when they tried to raise it, it refused to come up and so they had left it in the sea. Perhaps the "man of war" was in a hurry on account of some battle in which it was interested and cut the cable without trying hard to raise the anchor. Anyway, the little anchor caught hold of the rings of the big anchor and there it clung fast.

And now, you see what a sermon there is in that story. The poorest sort of preacher could preach a sermon from that story. If a very little anchor can slip into the great strong grasp of a great "man of war" anchor, all the great anchor's strength will be given to the little anchor. And if a little child's faith slips into the great strong keeping of God, all God's love and strength and goodness will hold that little soul safe. And if a little child will slip his hand into the great strong hand of Jesus, the strong hand of Jesus will hold him fast.

XXXV

THE PRINCE WITH MANY NAMES

"His name shall be called Wonderful."—ISA. 9: 6.

HOW many names may one person have? I have three names. And each one means something to me and to my family. How many names have you? I knew a minister who had four names and his first three names were Jeremiah Prophet Elijah. He was a very good man and there was something of both Jeremiah and the Prophet Elijah about him.

When I come to think about it, there is no one who has so many names as Jesus. There is a verse of an old hymn which has in it nothing but the names of Jesus.

"Jesus! my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring."

We call him Jesus and Christ and Lord and Master and Saviour and many, many other names.

Even back in the Old Testament, when they

were looking forward to his coming, Isaiah, the prophet, spoke of him as a Prince whose "name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." What wonderful names!

I have read that in one of the Catholic countries of Europe there is an old covered bridge and at different parts of the bridge there are twelve symbols or images of Jesus, and before the one that means most to them, people wait and worship. The shepherd driving his sheep waits before Jesus the Shepherd, the farmer waits before Jesus the Sower; the sick wait before Jesus the Physician; the sailor before Jesus the Pilot; the students bow before Jesus the Teacher. Each finds something in Jesus that he needs.

There is an old story which comes to us out of the past, to the effect that when the Wise Men came to the manger at Bethlehem, they waited before entering. The first to go in was an old man, and he found in the stable an old man. The second of the Wise Men was middle aged and when he entered he found there a man his own age. The third Wise Man was young and when he entered, he found a young prophet of his own age. Each had found the Saviour who answered to his own need. The story goes on to say that when

they all entered together they found the Child Jesus. Of course the story is not true, but it has a meaning. It means that Jesus meets our need and that he has a name that suits each one of us.

There once lived in America a man of great eloquence, by the name of Ingersoll. He was not a Christian. But some one once asked him what he thought of Jesus and this is what he said: "His name shall be called Wonderful, because no man ever dared to point his finger at the character of Christ and find any fault with him. Every time I see a rock, I remember that he is the Rock of Ages. I walk out under the stars, I remember that he is the Star of eternal day. When I come into one of God's temples, I remember that he is the Chief Corner Stone. When I walk the streets I remember that he is the Way and the Truth and the Life. When I see the birds in the air, I remember that he said, 'Not one sparrow will fall.' The flowers tell me that he is the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley. Wherever I go and wherever I look, in every land and in every city, the name of Jesus is Wonderful."

There is no one in all the world with so many beautiful and wonderful names as Jesus.

XXXVI

ASKING THE BLESSING

"In everything give thanks."—2 THESS. 5:18.

SOMETIMES the little children of mission lands are our teachers. It does not take them any longer than little children in America or in England to read and pray and work.

I was reading a story about a kindergarten in Japan. You know wherever the missionary goes the church goes and wherever the church goes, the school goes and wherever the school goes, the kindergarten goes, and there the dear little children of other lands soon learn to love Jesus.

Well, in this kindergarten every day at noon a little lunch was served. Children like to eat. I know a kindergarten connected with one of our missions where the children get half a pint of milk every morning at eleven o'clock. In this Japanese kindergarten when lunch was ready and all the children were seated comfortably on the floor, they would close their eyes and say a little prayer like this:

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"Bless this food which now we take
And make us good for Jesus' sake."

And then they would open their eyes and begin to talk and laugh and eat all at once, for they are just like other children.

One evening at her home, one of the little kindergarten girls bowed her head over her bowl of rice and said:

"Bless this food which now we take
And make us good for Jesus' sake."

"What are you doing?" asked her surprised father who loved her very, very much. "I'm thanking God for this rice," said his little daughter. "But your mother cooked the rice and prepared it for you," said the father. "Why do you not thank her?" "Yes, father," said the little girl, "I do thank mother for cooking it, but she did not make the rice. God made the rice and I am thanking him."

Now that was right, but it sounded strange to the father, and after thinking over it for some days, he went to the kindergarten and asked the missionary lady there what it all meant. And she told him. She told him about God's love and care and he, too, came to know Jesus and now in his home when the rice is served, all the family bow their heads and every one, father, mother and children all together say:

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"Bless this food which now we take
And make us good for Jesus' sake."

I was telling this story to a little boy and what do you think he said? He said that the little Japanese girl did not say her blessing right. He thought she should have said:

"God is great and God is good
So we thank him for our food.
In Jesus' name. Amen."

I told him that his blessing was just as good as the little Japanese girl's, and that her blessing was just as good as his. So he was satisfied. And then I told him of other blessings that people say all together. At breakfast they say:

"Father, we thank Thee for the night
And for the pleasant morning light,
For rest and food and loving care
And all that makes the day so fair."

And in the evening, they say:

"Lord Jesus, be our holy guest,
Our morning joy, our evening rest,
And with our daily food impart
Thy love and peace to every heart."

As long as we thank God for our food, the words we use do not much matter, but I wonder how many homes in our country have a better blessing than this new Christian home in far Japan?

XXXVII

THE OLDEST THING IN THE WORLD

"Love is of God."—I JNO. 4:7.

WHAT is the oldest thing in the world? When we talk about something being very old, we say it is as old as Methuselah. How old was Methuselah? He was the oldest man that ever lived and the Bible tells us that when he died he was nine hundred and sixty-nine years, nearly a thousand years old. But there are many things older than a thousand years. Trees are sometimes older than that and a piece of coal is thousands of years older. The Bible is older than a thousand years, so are the mountains, and the sea and the sky and the Atlantic Ocean. There must be something older than any of these things. Can you guess what it is?

The other day, just before Christmas, I went into a big store to see if I could see the oldest thing in the world. Yes! I went to the toy room and watched the children. I watched the boys with the mechanical toys and the airships and submarines, the wireless and the block sig-

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nal systems and the walking elephants, and yet I was not sure that I saw the oldest thing in the world. Then I watched the girls. There was one little lady of six or seven summers and she was holding a doll that had real eyelashes, and folded her hands and went to sleep, and after I had watched her for a little while, I knew that I had found the oldest thing in the world.

Can you guess? No! It is not curiosity. No! It is not play. It is love. The love of a little girl for her doll is older than mountains or trees, or rocks or oceans. Love is the oldest thing in the world for God, who lived before mountains or oceans, or trees, or dolls, is love, and love is of God.

Let me tell you how old love is. The other day some men were digging in an old land called Egypt and they found the body of a little girl. It had been wrapped in spices and linen so carefully that it had not been destroyed and when they unwrapped the linen, what do you think they found? A little doll. The little girl thousands of years ago had loved her doll just as the children to-day, and thousands of years after, men found the doll still in her arms.

And if you go back and back and back, before the world was made, and before the

angels, you will find love, for you will find God and God is love. The Bible tells us quite plainly that our love is born of God's love. It tells us that "we love because he first loved us." Our love for birds and flowers and little children, and for father and mother, brother and sister, and for God himself, is but the fruit of his great love for us. When Nansen, the great explorer, was in the Arctic Sea, he let out all his sounding line and it failed to touch the bottom. He wrote the date and the length of the line in his journal and then the words, "deeper than that." So it is with the love of God. No one has ever found its limit. It is deeper than the sea. It is as deep as our deepest need and his love so redeems us that we love others because of his love for us. Whenever you see a little girl playing with a doll, remember that love is not only the greatest thing in the world but also the oldest thing in the world.

XXXVIII

THE VALUE OF A BISHOP

"What is man?"—PSALM 8:4.

THERE was once a very interesting man who was bishop of New Jersey. His name was Bishop Doane. A bishop, you know, is a minister who takes care not only of one church, but of a great number of churches. He was a very wise bishop and never allowed things to get the best of him. He always got the best of things. He made his home at Burlington and travelled over the country, but liked his own home best.

One Saturday he was in New York collecting money for St. Mary's College, in which he was much interested. When about to leave his hotel to catch the train, a man called to give him some money for the college. He had no time to lose, neither did he wish to lose the money, but he decided to let the train go. He was glad to get the money but he was sorry to lose the train. When he got to the station, the last train for Burlington was gone.

What could he do? Next day was Sunday

and he had to preach at the dedication of a new church, and the last train had gone. He returned to the ticket agent and said, "Is there no other train?" The agent replied, "There is no other passenger train. The only other train is a freight train which will leave in an hour." "Then sell me a ticket for the freight train," said the bishop, for he was not ashamed to ride on a freight. He could ride in the caboose. Do you know what that is? Or he could ride with the engineer, or on top of the train with the brakeman. He did not care where he rode, if he only got home for Sunday morning. But the agent shook his head, saying the freight carried freight only and not passengers. "Then," said the bishop, "send me as freight." That was an odd thing to say, but the agent did not know what to say in reply, and so the dignified bishop stepped on the scales and was weighed. I do not know how much he weighed but he paid for himself at so much a pound and after paying the charges, which were much less than a ticket, he was put on board the freight train and shipped as freight to Burlington and next morning he preached and was none the worse for his strange ride.

Well, we like the bishop all the better for his humour and his good sense and above all for

his pluck and perseverance. But after all, no man, much less a bishop, can be classed as freight. We cannot be weighed and valued by the pound. Jesus once asked this interesting question: "How much better is a man than a sheep?" He did not try to answer his own question because a man and a sheep cannot be valued in the same way. The Psalmist, looking up at the stars in the sky, said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained, what is man?" And then he replied, "Thou hast made him but little lower than God and crownest him with glory and honour." So you see, men, women and little boys and girls cannot be classed as freight because they are children of God. They are immortal souls and one little child is worth more than all the world. If you placed the life of a little child on one side of the scales, and all the gold in the world on the other scale, the little child would outweigh in value all the gold in all the world. Do you remember what Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?" We are worth so much to God that he gave Jesus, his only beloved Son, to die upon the cross for us. A little child is worth more to God than the sun, and the moon, and all the stars together.

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XXXIX

PLAYING THE GAME

"Boys and girls playing."—ZECH. 8: 5.

DURING the Great War, the Y. M. C. A. huts in France were very interesting. There were American and British and French Y. M. C. A. huts and each one had its own pretty decorations. In the French huts one would see beautiful French war posters and in the American huts American posters. In the British, among the British war posters, there was always one printed sign which all who entered could see. It was in every British hut. It was printed like this:

Live clean.
Talk clean.
Fight clean.
Play the game.

Every British soldier was expected to live in the army and so to fight as a soldier that when the war was over he could say that he had lived clean, talked clean, fought clean, and that he had played the game. It is a good motto and it can be used in peace as in war.

Live clean. The soldier was expected to keep himself fit. He was to avoid eating, drinking, or doing anything that would make him unfit for service. It was his duty to keep his mind pure and his body pure and his conduct pure. The Bible tells us that our bodies are the temples of God's Holy Spirit. Let us make his dwelling place clean and pure.

Talk clean. To talk clean is to speak kindly, and to tell the truth. When a boy uses bad language or profane words, or tells a lie, he has forgotten to talk clean. When the people heard Jesus they were surprised at the "gracious words" which he spoke.

Fight clean. The German soldier did not fight clean. He was cruel and unfair. He fought helpless women and little children. He sent them adrift in open boats upon the stormy sea. The American and the British soldier fought clean. Now that the war is over there are still many things which we must fight. We can fight evil and sin and poverty and ignorance and in peace as in war we are to fight even evil with clean hands and pure hearts.

Play the game. The best thing about a game is not winning it but playing it fair. A good player is as good a loser as he is a winner, and all our games are meant to teach us to play fair, to keep sweet, to lose cheerfully and

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to praise whoever wins. Life is the greatest game of all and we live best when we keep sweet and true and kind even when things go wrong. The boy who plays the game sings this song:

"It is easy enough to be merry
When things go along with a song
But the boy worth while is the boy who smiles
When everything goes dead wrong."

Perhaps you can print the words of this motto and hang it in your room where you can see it every day.

Live clean.
Talk clean.
Fight clean.
Play the game.

XL

IN VERDUN

"Things that cannot be shaken."—HEB. 12:28.

EVERY one who knows about the Great War knows about Verdun. Verdun lay between France and Germany and against that city and fortress all the power of the German Army and all the skill of the German staff were gathered so that the Crown Prince might gain a great victory, and having taken Verdun open the gates for Germany to enter France.

One of the longest and bloodiest battles of the war was fought at Verdun. Around the hills of Verdun, I saw thousands and thousands of graves, but the French courage never faltered. They said, "They shall not pass," and for months the French held the city until Germany was driven back defeated.

But Verdun was ruined. It had been under shell-fire for weeks, had been set on fire by incendiary bullets and had burned for days until only ruin was left. When I entered it in the spring days of 1918, it was a deserted city. Only a few French soldiers kept guard. The streets were desolate. Not one house was

standing unharmed. Stores and shops, churches and monuments were ruins. The French officer who was responsible for our being there, quietly led us to the top of the hill to the great old cathedral which had stood since the eleventh century. The roof was gone, the windows destroyed. The day before a German shell had ploughed its way through the roof of the chancel and buried itself in the marble floor. It was a scene of utter ruin. No priest was there. Only a French soldier kept his silent vigil. I remember the hands of the clock in the half-ruined tower pointed to ten minutes to three. There seemed to be nothing left that had not been touched by bomb or shell. There was, however, one thing that was not harmed. It had escaped. The great high altar that rested on four beautifully polished porphyry pillars was untouched by fire or shell. It had come through the war, unharmed. I have often wondered since about that high altar. The altar you know stands for religion, for worship, for prayer and service and God. It has always seemed to me that the high altar in the old ruined cathedral of Verdun preached a sermon to all who saw it standing there unharmed.

And this is the sermon: There are many things that can be destroyed. Cathedrals and

palaces, castles and towers, towns and cities can be destroyed. Kings and nations, railroads and ships, farms and vineyards can be destroyed, but there are some things that cannot be harmed. There are some things that cannot be shaken.

The love of God cannot be either shaken or destroyed. The war destroyed more than we can tell. It destroyed houses and lands and kings and emperors. It destroyed our faith in men whom we once trusted, but it did not destroy our faith in the love of God. Through all the pain and the cruelty of the war we knew that God's best word to us is the word of the cross, which tells us that God is love.

The Word of God cannot be shaken or destroyed. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God's Word can never pass away. When Henry M. Stanley set out to find David Livingstone, he carried with him one hundred and eighty books. After he had travelled three hundred miles into the interior, he left some of the books behind. They were too heavy. As he journeyed further and further inland, his books became less and less and at last he had only one book left. It was the Bible. The Bible is the only book that lasts. It lasts because it is the *Word of God*. It is one of the things that cannot be shaken.

XLI

A FRENCH PATRIOT

"It is more blessed to give."—Acts 20:35.

DURING the Great War every one learned to love and admire France. She was so strong, so heroic, so brave. I remember standing in the quiet cemetery of the little village of Mailly, and counting one hundred and twenty-seven new-made graves. Each grave was marked with a white cross and on some of the crosses was the French word, "petite," which means little and is used as a pet name for one who is loved. Many of those who had died in the war were just boys, "petite" soldiers, and yet they were brave like heroes for the land they loved.

Near the same little village I heard a story of a French lad who had died in battle early in the war. He had run away from home and entered the army, and in his first battle he was killed. In one of his pockets they found a piece of paper neatly folded. He had written it himself and called it "My Creed." You know what a creed is. We repeat the Apostles'

Creed, which begins, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Well, the French boy's creed was shorter than the Apostles' Creed. It was very short. It contained only one sentence and this was what it said, "I give my body to the ground, my soul to God, my heart to France." I do not know where he got it. Perhaps he made it himself, but when he died they found this creed in the pocket of his uniform. There was no doubt about what he lived for and died for.

It is a good thing to have a creed, to believe in something for which we are ready to die. It is a good thing to know the Apostles' Creed and to believe in the things which are contained in its great words. I like the creed of the little French boy very much. It is all about giving. It is short and real and I wonder if we could not change it a little so as to suit not war but peace and not France only, but our own land. Suppose we say, "I give my body to the work, my soul to God, my heart to my home and to my country." This short creed contains three things. It contains the thought of work. No one can have a good, true life without work. An idler is worse than a thief. Jesus said, "My Father worketh and I work." It contains the thought of God, and no life can be right that forgets God. The first

sentence of the Bible says, "In the beginning God," and that should be the motto of every life. It contains also the thought of love,—love of home and love of country, and no one can have a complete life who lives and thinks only for himself. These three great words make life sweet and true: Work, God, Love.

There is a great painting called "The Angelus." Perhaps you have seen copies of it. It is a picture of a young man and a young woman out in the field where they have been working, bowing reverently in prayer as they listen to the church bell. There, too, we have these three great words. The picture tells about work, about love, and above all about God. Let us remember the words:—

"I give
My body to the work,
My soul to God,
My heart to my home
And to my country."

XLII

THE LITTLE COMPANION

"The Shadow of Peter."—ACTS 5:15.

I HAVE a friend who is the pastor of a great church in the city of Baltimore, and he has a little boy called Ernest. He is a bright little fellow and plays by himself a great deal. He is not the little boy who wished he were "two little puppies so that he could play together." He has learned to play by himself and gets along very well. He plays with trains and blocks and engines and balls and has a nursery where he has things all his own way. Boys like to have things their own way. They are very much like girls in that.

One morning when the sun was shining in through the nursery where Ernest was playing by himself, his father, who was in his study in a room nearby, heard him running round and round the room, knocking things over and making a terrible fuss. He paid no attention however until the lad began to cry, and then he hurried to the nursery. Ernest was standing in the middle of the room crying as if his

heart would break. When he saw his father he stopped crying and pointing to the wall said, "There he is. He won't leave me. He has been following me all over. Tell him to go away. I hate him." His father did not know what was the matter and thought the boy was sick. "Who is it?" he asked, and pointing to the wall again the boy said, "There he is. He won't go away."

What do you think it was? Well, it was the little boy's own shadow. He had never before seen his shadow, and in the bright room it seemed to him like another boy following him round and round, teasing him, going where he went, stopping when he stopped, pointing his finger at him when he pointed his finger, and stamping his foot and getting angry when he stamped his foot. That is the way a shadow acts.

"I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into
my bed.

"He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow
sticks to me!"

Ernest had a wise and good father, who took him on his knee and told him that what

he saw was just himself. It was just a picture of himself made by the sunlight. It did just what he did and went where he did. And then he told him that it was just like a little companion and was his best friend. When he played it would play with him and when he was naughty his little companion would be naughty too.

Whether we can see our shadow or not, one thing is sure and that is, you and I must live with ourselves. We must keep company with ourselves. It is wise, therefore, to see that this companion, who is always with us, is true and pure and strong. And there is another thing that is also sure and that is, each one of us casts a shadow which either helps or hinders some one else. The shadow of Peter brought healing and comfort to those who were in need. In the Bible we often read about God's shadow and how it protects and helps us. God calls us to take refuge under his shadow. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." In one of the Psalms there is offered this beautiful prayer, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; For my soul taketh refuge in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I take refuge." Jesus, himself, is spoken of as "the shadow of a mighty

rock." Jesus' shadow is just Jesus himself, and our shadow is a picture of ourselves cast by sunlight and reveals us just as we are. If we are true and strong and Christlike, so will the shadows we cast be true and strong and Christlike.

There is one thing we always should remember about shadows. Where there is no sunshine there can be no shadow. The clearer and stronger the light, the deeper and clearer the shadow. Shadows speak of reflected light. When we stand in God's sunlight, then the shadows we cast will be strong and clear. We are told that after the disciples had spoken for Jesus, in Jerusalem, their enemies knew by their words and their high courage, that they "had been with Jesus."

XLIII

GREATER THAN ALEXANDER

"Behold my hands."—LUKE 24: 39.

EVERY boy and girl has heard of Alexander the Great. He was a great soldier. It is said of him that he conquered the whole world, and wept because there was no other world to conquer.

He had many friends and each one tried to do more than any one else to honour him. The greatest architect of that day planned to carve out of the great mountain near the royal city a statue of Alexander. He planned to carve Mount Athos, which is over six thousand feet high, into a statue of the king. The left hand of this great statue was to hold a real city of ten thousand people, and the right hand was to hold a beautiful inland lake which would receive the waters of the mountain and then pour them out into the sea. Of course his plan was never worked out. Perhaps it could not be worked out. It was too big, too difficult, too odd. But the very plan showed what the architect thought of Alexander.

But Jesus is mightier than Alexander. No statue carved out of the world's highest mountain could show forth his power. He who was once a little child has become the world's greatest conqueror. He holds in his hand all the kingdoms of this world. The sea is his and he made it. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. The Christ Child has become the King. He holds the world in the hollow of his hand and all things are his.

Does Jesus hold you in his hand? Do you belong to him? Martin Luther once said, "If any one knocks at the door of my heart and says, 'Who lives there?' I will answer, 'Jesus Christ lives here, not Martin Luther.'" Can you say that? Do you belong to him? Does he hold your little life in his strong hand? One of the old writers once said: "The needle's point in the seaman's compass never stands still, but quivers and shakes till it comes right against the North Pole. The Wise Men of the East never stood still till they were right against the star which appeared unto them, and the star itself never stood still till it came right against that other Star which shone more brightly in the manger than the sun did in the firmament; and Noah's dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot all the while she was fluttering over the flood, till she returned to the

ark with an olive branch in her mouth. So the heart of every true Christian can find no rest till Christ puts forth his hand and receives her to himself."

There is a hymn we sometimes sing about Jesus holding our weak hand in his strong hand:—

"Hold Thou my hand; so weak I am, and helpless,
I dare not take one step without Thy aid;
Hold Thou my hand; for then, O loving Saviour,
No dread of ill shall make my soul afraid.

"Hold Thou my hand; and closer, closer draw me
To Thy dear self—my hope, my joy, my all;
Hold Thou my hand, lest haply I should wander,
And, missing Thee, my trembling feet should fall.

"Hold Thou my hand; the way is dark before me
Without the sunlight of Thy face divine;
But when by faith I catch its radiant glory,
What heights of joy, what rapturous songs are
mine!"

XLIV

THE ICE THAT MADE FIRE

"Fire came down from God."—REV. 20:9.

THE Bible is full of stories about fire. God guided the children of Israel through the wilderness by a pillar of fire. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came like tongues of fire. The New Testament speaks of God as a consuming fire and our Hymnal gives us the words:

"Come as the fire; and purge our hearts,
Like sacrificial flame:
Let our whole soul an offering be
To our Redeemer's Name."

In another of our beautiful hymns we ask God to

"Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours."

You know how hard it is to kindle a fire with cold fuel, and we wonder how God's great love can kindle into a flame in our cold worldly hearts. But it can, and it does.

I was reading a wonderful story about Sir

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John Franklin. You know he was one of the first men who tried to discover the North Pole and to find a passage through the Arctic Ocean. The story of his noble life and tragic death is one of the most heroic stories in history. He perished up in the frozen north with his companions, and years after his bones were found and beside the bones some books and one of the books was the Bible.

What a cold, cold world it was! But Sir John Franklin was a wise man and he knew a great deal about the sea, and the stars, and the ice, and the great sun, and one day he took a piece of cold, clear ice and cut it into the form of a lens.

You know what a lens is. A lens is usually made of glass. The glass in a pair of spectacles is a lens. The glass in a microscope or a telescope or in a camera is a lens. It is shaped so that the rays of the sun are gathered up by it into one spot. Well, Sir John Franklin, far up in the frozen north, made a lens not out of glass, but out of cold, hard ice and then he held it to the sun and the rays of the sun were gathered up by the lens of ice into one spot, so that after awhile when a piece of paper was held over that spot it became so hot that the paper began to burn and from the paper a fire was lighted. Is not that wonderful! Of

course if you try to do it, your ice will melt before your paper will burn.

But that is not as wonderful as something else I know about. It is not as wonderful as the warm love of God coming into my cold heart and making it burn with love for him. That is a more wonderful thing. Do you remember the story of the young man who went up to the temple with a cold heart to a cold service, and while the service was going on, suddenly God came to him and touched his lips with a coal of fire, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged." And then his heart took fire and when God called for helpers he cried out, "Here am I, send me." God is like fire. He cleanses and purifies. He warms and comforts.

XLV

I NEVER KNEW HIS NAME

"The deaf ear."—MATT. II: 5.

I HAVE heard boys sometimes discussing among themselves whether they would rather be deaf or blind. It is an odd question. Of course we are very glad we do not need to choose and can go on enjoying the sights and the sounds of God's beautiful world.

There is something, however, worse than being either deaf or blind. You say that is impossible. What can be worse than being blind or deaf? Well, I can easily answer that by saying it is worse to be both blind and deaf at the same time.

And that was the way with Helen Keller. You have heard about Helen Keller. She was born both deaf and blind and yet she so overcame both her deafness and her blindness that she not only entered Harvard University, but completed her course and graduated with the praise and good-will of thousands of her friends in all parts of the world. The deaf,

you know, learn to read by signs, and the blind learn to read by touch, but how could one both deaf and blind learn anything at all, much less learn to read? Well, Helen Keller had a wise and patient and kind teacher who held her hand and little by little, by the touch of her hand, taught her a few things and then more and more until her mind became awake. It was like spelling out messages by signals. After the signals were mastered, everything else became easy.

After years of patient work and study her teacher decided that Helen should be told something about God. What could she know about God? She had never seen his name or heard it. She had never heard a hymn or a sermon, or seen a church. What would you know about God if you had lived all your childhood in a dark, silent room.

One day there came to her home a great, good man by the name of Phillips Brooks. He was a bishop and was kind and wise and gentle. And Phillips Brooks sat down beside Helen Keller and her teacher, and the teacher told Helen by means of signs on her hands what Bishop Brooks said about God, and his great love for us, how he made the world and cares for us as his own dear children. When

he had finished his first lesson she looked up with her sightless eyes and said, "Oh, Mr. Brooks, I knew all that before, but I never knew his name." Was that not wonderful?

How did she know about God? Who had told her? As far as her friends and her teacher knew, no one had ever said anything to her about God. Yet she knew about God, but did not know his name. How do you account for that?

Well, God has many ways in which he can speak to us. He does not need to speak in English or French or Latin. He can speak to our hearts by his Spirit. We can feel him and love him and know him because he reveals himself to us by his own Holy Spirit in his own secret and wonderful way. When Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he did not know him. He said, "Who art thou, Lord," and a voice said, "I am Jesus." When God appeared to Moses in the wilderness, Moses heard no voice and saw no form, he only saw a flaming, burning bush, and then when he drew near God spoke to him and revealed himself to him. God is always nearer than we think. In him we live and move and have our being. He speaks in his own way to all his children.

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"Speak to him for he hears
And spirit with spirit may meet,
Closer is he than breathing
Nearer than hands or feet."

There is no one who has not heard God's voice
for his Spirit abides in all his children.

XLVI

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

"Neither slumber nor sleep."—Ps. 121:4.

EVERY boy and girl knows about Robert Louis Stevenson's "A Child's Garden of Verses," which has so many pictures little children love. He was a great story teller and everybody loves a story teller. It was he who wrote about "The Land of Nod," that strange country which children visit in their sleep and in their dreams.

"From breakfast on through all the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the land of Nod.

"All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do—
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain sides of dreams.

"The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the land of Nod.

"Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear."

But Robert Louis Stevenson, when he was a little boy did not always visit the land of Nod when dark came down upon the land. Sometimes all night long he stayed in the Land of Wide-Awake, for he was a delicate little lad and often ill and sometimes all through the night his old Scotch nurse kept watch with him waiting for the dawn to come in.

He used to say that it was his old nurse that made him a poet and a writer, for in the night she would tell him such wonderful stories and set his mind on fire. He tells us that often in the night when he could not sleep she would wrap him in a blanket and carry him to the window and they would look out over the great sleeping city of Edinburgh and she would point to the lighted windows here and there and tell him that perhaps there were other little boys who were ill and could not sleep, and she would show him the stars and tell him they too were God's lighted windows and that God never slept, but kept watch over all the dear little children who, like himself, were watching for the day-dawn. Then they would look out into the dark, for a long time, without speaking, and Robert Louis Stevenson would think about those other little sleepless boys who perhaps did not have a kind nurse and as happy a home as he did, and after a

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little his eyes would begin to close and before he knew he had fallen asleep and was tucked away in bed.

I often think of those lighted windows in the night. They are always there. If some night you look out, you, too, will see them and they tell us that there are other people, who watch and wait, who suffer and are sick and that God watches and cares for all. And Robert Louis Stevenson knew God, and among the Psalms which his old nurse taught him to say by heart and which he never forgot, was Psalm 121, which says:—

“He that keepeth thee
Will not slumber;
Behold he that keepeth Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy Keeper.”

XLVII

AN EASTER STORY-SERMON

"With fear and great joy."—MATT. 28:8.

IT happened in Spain. At least they say it happened there, for this story is very strange and yet it is very old. You may call it a fairy story, and I will not quarrel with you about it, for it is old and pretty and in a real sense true. Wise people would call it a legend.

Well, it happened in Spain, near the old city of Toledo. It was in the time of the wild people who are called Moors. They came over from Africa and sent fear and terror through the country, for they were cruel and brave and put to death thousands of innocent people and destroyed beautiful churches and cities.

Near the old city of Toledo there was a beautiful cathedral church where old men acted as monks and priests. They were quiet and kind, and as the dark came on they loved to sing the old hymns and chants of the church. Their cathedral was built among the trees of the woods near the city and people would come from all parts of the country and in the evening listen to the chanting of the old monks.

It was, as I said, in the days of the Moors, and the monks heard with fear in their hearts that these wild men were coming nearer and nearer their cathedral. One day they heard that they had captured the old city of Toledo and were marching out into the forest to destroy and ruin the old convent church. At last the gleaming spears of the Moors were seen through the underbrush. The old monks, however, did not run. They went into their places in the choir and began to sing, "Glory to God in the Highest." And then what do you think happened? You could never guess. No. The Moors did not run away. They came right on to kill and to destroy. But when they came to the cathedral, lo! it had disappeared. They looked and looked, but they could see nothing and all they could hear was a little bird singing in the branches. The foundations and the towers, the organ and the singers had all sunk beneath the ground or gone up into the sky, no one could tell where. Is not that a strange story?

But that is not the strangest part of the story. The best part of this strange story is that fifty years after, a lonely traveller was passing through the forest where the cathedral once stood. It was near evening and suddenly he stopped and listened, for he thought he

heard the sound of vesper bells and the words of the evening song. He did hear them, but he could see nothing, only a heap of moss-covered stones with a rude wooden cross. There, in the still, still forest the lonely traveller heard heavenly music and bowed his head and worshipped. You say, "Of course the story is not true." Well, you can have your own way about that, but I know a better story that is like it and yet is true.

It is the story of Jesus. You know that story. The time came when wild, bad men came to him to destroy him. They found him out in the garden where he was saying his evening prayer. They dragged him before the judge and then took him out to Calvary and nailed him to the cross. They pierced his side with a spear and then laid his body away in a rocky cave. They thought that was the end. He had disappeared and they thought he had gone forever. But a few days later they heard his friends singing, and when asked why they were so glad, they said, "Jesus is risen." And he had. And every Easter Day as we pass the cross and the new tomb we hear millions of voices and they are all singing:

"Christ the Lord is risen to-day,
Sons of men and angels say:
Raise your joys and triumphs high;
Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply."

XLVIII

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

"I stand at the door."—REV. 5:20.

THIS is a story about a prince. He is a king now, but he was just a boy when this story happened. He was very fond of the sea and among all the things he loved and liked, he loved and liked a sail boat best of all.

So one summer he and his brother spent the long days sailing in and around the beautiful bays of Scotland. They sailed far north and spent much time in the Moray Firth, a beautiful bay near Inverness, in the north of Scotland.

One morning they landed at Inverness and agreed to spend the day tramping among the heather hills of the Highlands. If you have ever been there you know how wild and lonely those heather hills are and you will not be surprised when I tell you that they lost their way and could not find the path back to their boat. They wandered on and on until darkness shut them in and they were ready to lie

down and spend the night in the heather hills. It was near midnight, but they saw a light and their hearts rejoiced. They made their way to the light and found a little house, and at the closed door they knocked loud and long. Instead of the door being opened, an angry voice bade them be off and away or the dog would be let out upon them. So they left that unfriendly house, but found shelter in a little cottage not far removed, for they had come at last, unknown to them, to the edge of a village.

Next morning the story of the young men was told from house to house and with the story, the names of the young men were whispered and people looked wonderingly at each other. What was the story and what were the people whispering about? What do you think? Well, it was this,—that one of the young men who had lost his way was Prince George, now George V, King of England, and the other was his brother, the Duke of Clarence, and that they had knocked at Mr. So-and-So's door in the night and had been ordered away and threatened with having the dog set on them. What do you think of that? And what would Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So think when they heard that they had refused to admit their future king?

But are we better than they? We, too, have a Prince who is also a King and he, too, has knocked at our door. He has knocked not once, but often. He has not lost his way, but has come of his own purpose to our very door. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." What will you do? Will you let him in? Or will you tell him to go somewhere else? We sing:—

"O Jesus, thou art standing
Outside the fast closed door;
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er."

Why should we keep him standing outside the door? Why not open the door and say:—

"Dear Saviour, enter, enter,
And leave us never more."

XLIX

I—VERY LITTLE BUT VERY WISE

"The Ants.—Prov. 30: 25.

THE other day out in the field I discovered something, and stooping down to pick a little violet which seemed to be the first one of the spring time, something happened. I had picked the little flower and was ready to look for another when suddenly something darted out from beneath my feet and scampered off into the bushes. What do you think it was? It was a little baby rabbit, not larger than a little baby's hand, and it had been lying there in its nest just the colour of the ground, and while it had seen me all the while, I had not noticed it, and if it had kept quiet, I would have passed on and never known of its little secret nest. I think a little nest in a field, or in a tree, is one of the most interesting things in the world.

I want to show you just such a little nest. It is not in a tree, nor in a field, but in a book. It is hidden away in this book which we call the Bible, and it has been there for years and

years and years. In that little nest four little animals have been sleeping for centuries and have only been disturbed by preachers, like myself, who occasionally stumble upon them. They are such strange little animals. They are not brothers nor sisters, nor cousins, nor forty-second cousins. They are not relatives at all, and yet they have been in this nest together for years. They do not look alike, but they are all very little and very wise. I will tell you about them.

I am going to put my hand into the nest and take one out—just one. How quick it is! It runs over my fingers and up my sleeve and round my neck and down my arm, and there it is now, in the hollow of my hand. Let us look at it. It is a little creature, all joints and all nerves. It has six legs and two little hands, but it has no wings. It has the tiniest eyes you ever saw, and the most wonderful brain for its size in the world. I suppose you know what it is. It is an ant. What a wise little thing it is! It knows how to work, and it knows how to play, and it is clean. It never has dirty hands, nor a dirty face. It knows how to bury the dead, and it knows how to punish the wrongdoer, and it knows how to be kind to the helpless. It belongs to a little society called "The first aid to the injured."

It lives in a home and belongs to a great family. It has a king and a queen, princes and princesses, servants and slaves, friends and neighbours. Do you not think it is very wise even though it is very little?

It is called wise because of one thing. It prepares its food in the summer time for the long winter months. "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." It knows how to look ahead. A wise man once watched a little ant, and it worked from six in the morning till ten at night, sixteen long hours, and it never thought once of striking for shorter hours, and it carried one hundred and eighty-seven seeds and laid them away for the long, dark days of the winter. That is why we say that it is very little but very wise.

Now, boys and girls can be wise in that way also. There is just one summer to every winter; just one dawn to every day; just one childhood to every life, and just one life to every eternity. To get ready for life is to be wise like the ant. When Queen Victoria was a little girl, just eight years old, her teacher slipped into her little book a piece of paper which told her that some day she would be the Queen of England. She looked at it and thought for a long while and then she said,

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"I am nearer to the throne than I think. I will try to get ready and I will be good." She was good, and she did get ready and became the greatest and best of queens. We are all nearer the throne than we think, for we are the children of God, who is the King of Kings.

And here is a little prayer you may use to ask God to help you be good:

"I am trusting thee, Lord Jesus,
Trusting only thee:
Trusting thee for full salvation
Great and free.

"I am trusting thee to guide me.
Thou alone shalt lead,
Every day and hour supplying
All my need.

"I am trusting thee for power,
Thine can never fail:
Words which thou thyself shalt give me
Must prevail.

"I am trusting thee, Lord Jesus;
Never let me fall;
I am trusting thee for ever,
And for all."

L

II—VERY LITTLE BUT VERY WISE

"The Conies."—PROV. 30:26.

AS the ant, about which I was speaking in the last story runs off, I put my hand into the little nest again and touch a little bit of an animal that feels like a baby rabbit. It is timid and trembles when I touch it. I will hold it in my hand and tell you what it looks like. It is a small greyish-brown little creature with soft fur. It has a little dash of white under its neck and just the name of a tail. It has sharp white teeth and the prettiest of manicured finger nails. It has fourteen toes. If you want to know how many it has on each of its feet, look at the feet of your little kitten when you go home. It is very shy and bashful and you can scarcely get a look at it unless you are very smart. It is called a Coney and it lives in the rocks. I suppose its real name is Hyra. The Bible says it belongs to the "feeble folk," but because they make their houses in the rocks, they are not easily hurt or caught.

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That is why they are wise. They are weak, timid little things, but they have strong houses built in the clefts of the solid cliffs. If you lived in the East and wanted to see one, you would have to look smart. You would have to go out in the evening and climb up the rock and lie still and watch. By and by you would see a little head, then you wouldn't see it, then you would see it and then you wouldn't see it, and then again if you kept quiet, out it would come. Then another and another would come, and they would eat and nibble away just like rabbits, but if you make a noise, they are gone in a minute and a whole army of American soldiers could never reach them. They make their houses in the rocks, and so they are wise and safe.

Are we as wise as the conies? Our safety too depends greatly upon where we build. Jesus tells us to build our house upon the rock where the storm and the tempest cannot hurt or harm. I have heard of a boy who started to school and he was going to be a lawyer and become very clever and very great. The teacher said to him, "Well, my lad, after you have finished your studies, what will you do then?" "Oh, I will go to college then," said the boy, and "What then?" said the teacher. "Then I will

be a lawyer and wear fine clothes and make fine speeches and talk to the Judge and be a great man." "And what then?" said the teacher. "Then I will be a Judge and decide great cases and people will honour me for being a wise man." "And what then?" said the teacher, and the boy said, "Then I will be very happy and live in a fine house." "And what then?" said the teacher, and the boy said, "Then I suppose I will die like all the rest." "And what then?" but the boy could not answer. He had never thought of that, and it is said that after that, he began to think and became a Christian. He found the rock and then he was safe.

"On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand."

LI

III—VERY LITTLE BUT VERY WISE

"The Locusts."—PROV. 30:27.

I PUT my hand into the nest again and try to catch another of the four little animals that have been sleeping there for centuries. My, but it is hard to catch! It kicks and jumps and hops and steps about so lively that one has to take both hands to catch it. Well, here it is! It's the most ticklish thing I ever had in my hand. It is like a jumping jack. It seems to be all legs, and to have long legs too. It has long, thin, gauzy wings. It has a little square head and sharp jaw. I wonder if you can guess what it is. Well, I guess it's a grasshopper. The Bible calls it a locust.

The interesting thing about this little locust or grasshopper is that it is a soldier. It has no weapons but its teeth and legs and wings, but it is a soldier. It belongs to the infantry, and also to the aviation corps. It can march and it can fly. This is what the Bible says about it,—“The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by companies.” If you

will turn to another book, it will tell you what wonderful soldiers these little creatures are. "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war and they shall march every one on his way; and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path; and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses, they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." (Joel 2:7-10.) What a wonderful soldier this little locust is!

And so this little creature teaches boys and girls to keep step, to march in the ranks, to walk side by side with one another. Sometimes we like to get out of step and to do what we please and go our own way, but if we are to succeed we must keep in step. One day a proud mother was watching the soldiers marching, and her own boy was among them, and afterwards she said, "What fine lads they are and my boy was the only one that was in step." Of course he was out of step, but all good soldiers keep step.

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These little locusts had no king yet they kept step and conquered cities and countries. They climbed over walls and houses and made the whole land where they came their own. They were soldiers, however, of famine and distress. They were not soldiers of peace and plenty. We too are soldiers—soldiers of peace, and we have a King and a Leader, and what an army he has! The best part of his army is the great regiment of little children who make the best soldiers for they follow wherever he leads, and this is the song they sing:—

“Onward, then, ye people,
Join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices
In the triumph-song;
Glory, laud, and honour
Unto Christ the King:
This through countless ages
Men and angels sing.

“Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.”

LII

IV—VERY LITTLE BUT VERY WISE

"The lizard."—PROV. 30:28.

THE fourth little animal in this Bible nest has been very patient but at last we must wake it up and learn its lesson. I do not know whether to take it in my hand or not. Perhaps I ought to put on a pair of gloves before I pick it up. Some people think it is poisonous. I hardly think so and I'll run the risk of holding it in my hand.

I scarcely know what it is. No one seems to know exactly what it is, for its name occurs only once in all the Bible, and you can't tell what a thing is if you only hear the name once. Sometimes it is called a spider, and a spider is not a very nice thing to hold in one's hand, and sometimes it is called a lizard,—a little soft-fleshed, delicate, spotted little thing, and this is what the Revised Version of the Bible says about it. "The lizard taketh hold with her hands, yet is she in kings' palaces."

There is one thing that this little animal can do. It can climb. It is very little, but it can

climb high. It can climb over walls that are as smooth as the floor, and over ceilings that are as smooth as glass, right up into the very palace of the King, and into the Queen's chamber.

If there is one thing a boy can do—and some girls too, it is to climb. Boys and girls are always climbing, climbing out of their clothes and out of their shoes, and out of their high chairs, and out of their toys and their classes and their schools, and their colleges, up into life, into manhood and womanhood. We would not like them if they did not climb. We want boys and girls to grow, to grow tall and strong and good and beautiful. I can imagine that every time Mary looked at Jesus she would say, "My, how fast he grows," and when Luke began to write the life of Jesus he soon discovered that he never stayed still but was always growing and so he wrote, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men." He climbed out of childhood and boyhood into manhood and power and into favour with God and men. A great writer has said, "No child, no boy, no lad, no young man in all Galilee was in such universal favour, was so popular, and so universally beloved for thirty years as was Jesus of Nazareth." I like to think this was so, and that as the years

went by, Jesus grew in loveliness and favour until everybody was his friend and he became the favourite playmate of all his friends.

God means us to climb and he is always saying, "Come up higher." Away over in the mountains of Switzerland there is a little granite tombstone, high up in the mountains, and on it there is the name of the mountain guide who died as he was climbing the snow-capped mountains, and on that little stone, there are carved the words, "He died climbing." I think that is a very good motto for any one. God means us to climb. To climb out of our weakness into his strength, out of our sinfulness into his love, and at last out of life into his Eternity. Like the lizard, we too can climb into the very palace of the King.

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